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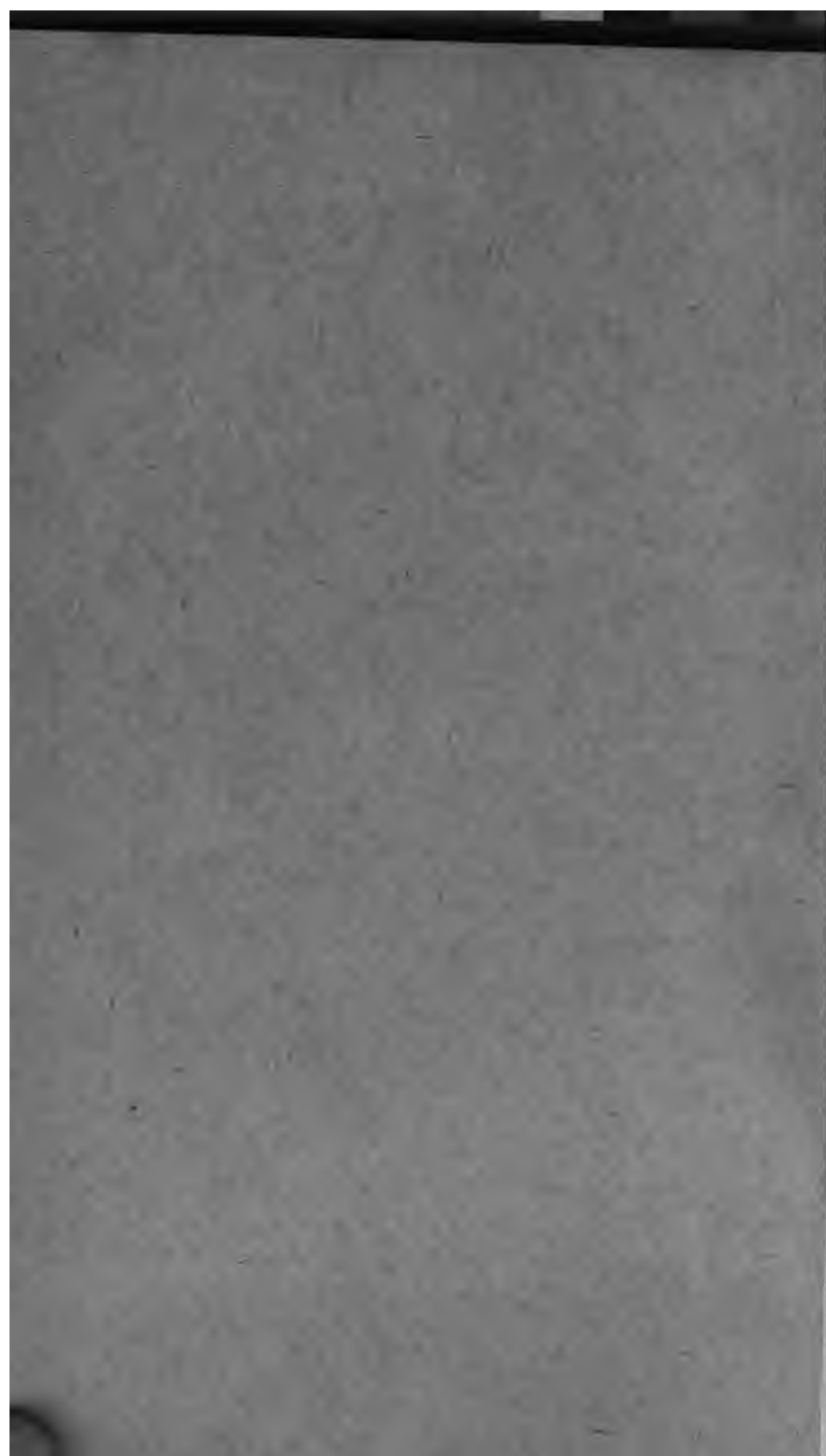
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JASON HILDRETH'S IDENTITY.

BY

VIRNA WOODS,

AUTHOR OF "THE AMAZONS" AND "A MODERN MAGDALENE."

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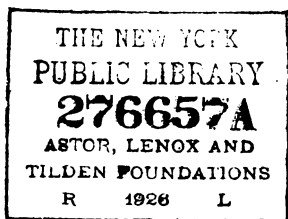
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JASON HILDRETH'S IDENTITY.

I.

HE awoke one morning and looked with vague interest about the unfamiliar room. A round marble-topped table, with several bottles of medicine on it, stood by his bed; a wash-stand was set against the opposite wall, and in one corner was a large wooden wardrobe. Two or three cane-seated chairs completed the furniture; the walls were unadorned, save with a half-length mirror that hung over the bare mantel. The blind was drawn down over the partly opened window, and he heard a faint rumble, as though from a city street, far below.

"I must be in a lodging-house," he thought; but farther than this his mind refused to go. "It may be Paris, or Melbourne, or New York," he reflected, with grim amusement.

The door opened, and a woman tiptoed into the room, carrying some towels over her arm. She was followed by a young man, who advanced to the bed and started back in surprise.

"The delirium is broken," he said.

He picked up one of the bottles on the table and poured out a spoonful of the medicine. The sick man opened his mouth and swallowed the dose obediently.

"Where am I?" he queried, looking up at the attendant, whom he judged to be a professional nurse.

"You are in San Francisco," was the reply; "but the doctor said I was not to allow you to talk."

The patient closed his eyes, and drifted from his dreamy thoughts so slowly that he did not know when they had merged into veritable dreams.

When he awoke again, it was early evening. The soft light of a shaded lamp burned on the table beside him. The nurse stood at the foot of the bed, and a man bent over him. It must be the doctor, for he had been feeling his pulse. The face was dimly familiar to him, as

though he had seen it in his dreams. It was a fair, bright, kindly face, still young; and the voice that belonged to it was cheery and pleasant.

"How do you feel?" it said, as the patient looked up with questioning eyes.

"I feel as though I had just been born," was the reply: he was very weak, and knew neither where nor who he was.

The doctor laughed and nodded his head.

"The fever has left you, and you have no strength," he said; "but you will soon be all right. And then," he added, with a chuckle, "you will have to give an account of yourself, for you seem to have dropped out of the clouds."

He gave some directions to the nurse and went away. The patient closed his eyes and pretended to sleep, that the attendant might not disturb him; for he wanted to think.

He remembered, after a little while, that the nurse had told him he was in San Francisco; but what the city looked like, or how he had come there, he could not tell. His idea of the place, he knew, must be the old idea he had when a boy at school, for it was a confused combination of sheep-men and sombreros and poker and pistols; but at the same time he heard the sound of car-bells and the noise of traffic on the street below.

"Who am I? who am I?" he repeated over and over to himself.

He half unclosed his eyes and looked at his wasted hand as it lay on the coverlet. It was long and slender, and evidently unused to manual labor.

"I cannot be a working-man," he thought. "I wonder if I am educated."

Then he tried to test himself; and, swiftly and inconsequently, isolated facts began to pass like a Mardi-Gras procession through his mind:

"Columbus discovered America in 1492; water is composed of two parts hydrogen to one part oxygen; the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides."

Then he tried to repeat to himself the process of the circulation of the blood; and he remembered that the astronomers were theorizing about establishing communication with Mars. Next he found himself repeating automatically certain rules of Latin grammar that he must have learned when a boy; and immediately after he began to formulate his thoughts in the French language.

"Well," he thought, with inward satisfaction, "I seem to have been pretty well educated. I wonder if I am English, or American, or French."

Then a sense of utter isolation swept in upon him with intolerable pain. He was alone, cut off from his friends, who were perhaps waiting anxiously for tidings of him; unable to readjust himself to his position in the world. It was as though he were blind or dumb. The circuit was broken that connected him with the rest of mankind. He was terribly alone.

"In the centre of immensities, in the conflux of eternities," he murmured, involuntarily.

"Do you want anything?" asked the nurse, rising and going to him.

The sick man shook his head impatiently. He wanted to think undisturbed.

Again and again he tried to gain some clue to his identity, but in vain. He seemed to remember all the general truths that he had ever learned, to recollect books he had read, pictures he had seen, music to which he had listened; but all personal associations had been obliterated from his mind. Whether or not he had a family, he did not know; not a single face came to him from all the circle of friends and acquaintances he must once have possessed. He wondered how old he was. He thought, from his hands, and from his teeth, which seemed perfect, that he must yet be young.

A sudden fear broke into the current of his thought. The doctor had said that when he was stronger he must give an account of himself. He could not do so, and he was afraid he would be considered mad. That he was not mad, and that the memory of his life would some time return to him, he felt sure; but in the mean time he must face the danger of incarceration in an asylum. To prevent such a possibility, he must give himself a name and construct for himself a biography. He would defer the relation of the fiction as long as possible, in the hope that his true name and history would recur to him; but he would be prepared, if the doctor should seek to carry out his laughing threat. So he lay in the quiet of feigned slumber, and thought out the apocryphal narrative he was later to give to his new friends.

It was later in the evening that he heard the murmur of voices in the hall just outside his room. The attendant had gone out for a few moments, and two women, probably maids in the establishment, were standing just outside his door, which was slightly ajar.

"He hasn't said a word about his friends or asked them to send word to any one," one of the voices murmured.

"No," said the other, in the same cautious undertone; "but, whether he has friends or not, he has money. Mrs. McFall says there was eight hundred dollars in his valise. And lucky for him, or he'd been taken to the county hospital."

"A good-looking young man he is, too," continued the first voice, "for all he's that poor you can a'most see through him. It's queer, now, isn't it, that there was never a letter nor a card on him at all. But we'll know all about it when Dr. Richmond comes. Trust me to get it out of Peter, for all he's a professional nurse."

The girls passed down the hallway, and the voices became inaudible.

The patient lay back and closed his eyes wearily. The test was coming sooner than he expected; and already his strange reticence had been noticed. Had he a mother, or a sweetheart, or a wife? His heart thrilled at the thought, but no answering chord of memory stirred in his brain.

The nurse came back and resumed his patient watch by the window : the monotony of an hour was measured by the ticking of the clock.

The feigned sleep of the patient was disturbed at last by the entrance of the doctor.

"You're better to-night," he said, as he bent a moment over the bed. But before he could make any further remark he was interrupted by the patient himself, who had decided to take the initiative in the conversation and use the cue the housemaids had unconsciously given him.

"I have been worrying about a little matter, doctor," he said, "since I have regained consciousness ; and I wish to relieve my mind about it. I had about eight hundred dollars in my valise——"

"It is all right," said the doctor, smiling : "it is locked up in the safe down-stairs ; that is, the most of it. What we have had to use has been kept account of, and you shall see that it is all right."

"Then I should like to know how I came here ; for I cannot remember anything about it."

"No wonder you can't remember," said the doctor, delighted that his mysterious patient was beginning to talk at last. "You were found lying half clothed on the pier at the Pacific Mail wharf, sand-bagged and robbed. The fiends must have been frightened away, or they would probably have pitched you into the bay. You would have been taken to the Receiving Hospital, had you not been recognized by the bell-boy here as a lodger of Mrs. McFall's. But no one knew who you were, as you had just come the day before, and had given no name : so it was impossible to send word to your friends."

"Didn't I talk in my delirium?" the sick man asked.

"Yes, you talked a great deal," the doctor replied, "but nothing sensible that we could understand. Half the time you spoke in French. You said a great deal about *ma petite chérie*, but you mentioned no names."

"I wonder if I am French," the patient thought ; and he hastily interpolated in the narrative he had prepared an explanation of his use of that language.

"But my letters," he ventured to suggest, feeling out in a new direction ; "surely you must have found my name somewhere."

"No," the doctor replied ; "whatever letters and papers you had must have been on your person when you were robbed, and were taken with your other valuables. There was nothing whatever by which we could identify you. The only writing we could find among your possessions was a verse written on a slip of paper in a book of German poetry. A stanza was written in German in a masculine hand, and the translation of the stanza was written below in a woman's writing."

"Evidently I read German," said the sick man to himself. "What next? I am afraid to go on with this investigation, lest I find myself to be an Arab or a Chinaman." But aloud he asked to see the paper.

When it was handed to him, he read, in clear, large German script, the words,—

Seele des Menschen,
Wie gleichst du dem Wasser;
Schicksal des Menschen,
Wie gleichst du dem Wind.

And below it was written, in a clear, flowing English hand, the translation :

Soul of man,
How like the water!
Fate of man,
How like the wind!

He stared at the paper, struggling to connect the familiar writing with some associated ideas, until he saw that his silence was observed. Then he spoke abruptly.

"The German," he said, "is my own writing; the translation is that of a friend."

He spoke carelessly, but his thoughts were perturbed.

"Truly, indeed," he reflected, "my soul is like the water and my fate like the wind; for I know not whence I come nor whither I go."

"Do you not wish," said the doctor, as the patient volunteered no further remark, "to have word sent to some of your friends?"

"It is not worth while to do so until I can write myself," the sick man replied. "My friends are all in the East,—in New York," he added, as the doctor looked at him inquiringly. "I have no family. My nearest relative is a cousin on my father's side. I came out for a pleasure-trip, with the idea that if I liked the place I would remain. You see, I am perfectly free, and can follow my whims."

"Excuse me," said the doctor, with much interest, "but are you French?"

"My mother was French," was the reply, "and I have spoken the language from my infancy."

While they were talking, the door had been cautiously opened, and Mrs. McFall's ample figure had slipped silently into the room. A few moments later, the two maids whose voices the sick man had heard in the hall had returned and stopped again at the partially opened door. He became aware of the presence of his silent auditors, and his nervousness and fear of discovery increased.

"I could not be more anxious to deceive them if I had committed a crime," he thought.

He lay silent, still hoping that they would not ask his name; and yet he was uneasily aware that his reticence seemed strange to them. A dozen names he had thought over and rejected: some seemed so common as to excite suspicion of an alias; others were foreign, or in some way startlingly strange. At last he had settled, almost at random, upon one that seemed to possess individuality without being sufficiently peculiar to provoke comment. He had felt, somehow, that a great deal depended upon this selection of a name; and now that it was trembling on his lips, he felt a strange distrust of it. But he had no time to reconsider it or cast it aside; for the doctor leaned over him and asked his name. He saw Mrs. McFall bend forward

expectantly and the nurse lift his head ; outside the door he heard the rustle of a dress. But he looked up with well-feigned composure and answered quietly.

"My name is Jason Hildreth," he said.

II.

The days passed into weeks, the weeks into months, and Jason Hildreth had entirely recovered from his illness. So thought the doctor, who had become his friend ; and so thought the circle of acquaintances he had made in the strange city.

He was a popular man, for he was genial and companionable ; but even among his most intimate friends he retained his reticence about the past. The doctor himself knew no more of his history than he had learned the day his patient awoke from delirium. Their intimacy began in a common interest in the study of languages and in rare old editions ; and Dr. Richmond's library was soon as free to Jason Hildreth as to the doctor himself.

In the early days of his convalescence, the doctor, on one of his professional visits, found the patient poring over a philological treatise in one of the current magazines ; and as soon as he was able to go out, he took him home to show him his library. It was a clear, bright day, and the drive through the strange city filled the patient with a sense of exhilaration. He breathed in the salt air with a feeling of ecstasy ; he gazed delightedly on the curving line of the bay, gleaming in the distance, and dotted with sails ; and again on the hilly streets, rising in terraces, and lined with rows of tall houses, presenting for the most part solid fronts of bay-windows. He felt certain that he had never seen the city before ; the arrangement of the streets, the hills, and the architecture of the buildings, all were unfamiliar to him ; and the novelty of the scenes interested and charmed him.

"How does San Francisco compare with New York?" queried the doctor, turning to his companion with a smile.

"It is very different," was the guarded reply ; and the speaker, though not the faintest recollection of his former home occurred to him, felt that this much was the truth.

They were driving up one of the fine residence streets, when the doctor turned into the drive of a beautiful place, and, calling his boy to put up the horse, led Jason into the house.

He took him at once into his "den," which was situated in the basement, or ground-floor, of the three-story house, and communicated with the library, a much larger room. The "den" contained nothing to indicate the owner's profession, except a single case of medical books treating on obscure diseases that possessed for him more of a scientific than a practical interest.

"My medical library is in my office down-town," he said, as his visitor glanced about the room : "these books are for recreation."

Jason glanced over the shelves, and was delighted to find many of

his old favorites, not only in English, but also in several Continental languages, as well as all the standard and some of the rare works on philology. One case of exquisitely carved teak-wood was filled with old editions and rare art-works. A secretary stood open, littered with papers; near it was a cabinet of fine corals and shells. On a cloth-covered table were several beautiful specimens of moths, and a large microscope with a piece of fungus on the slide. The easy-chairs that were scattered over the room were a confused mass of pillows and newspapers and open pamphlets; a variety of pipes decorated the tables and shelves, and a faint aroma of tobacco-smoke pervaded the air.

In the hour that Jason Hildreth spent looking over the doctor's treasures, their casual acquaintance ripened into a friendship that the many vicissitudes of the future were never to disturb. He became a frequent visitor at the house, and a great favorite of Miss Vaughn, the doctor's aunt, a lady who had been a belle in her youth, and, with her brilliant dark eyes and soft white hair, was still beautiful. In fact, she was even now prominent in social functions, and insisted upon launching her new favorite in San Francisco society.

"Do you know," she said to him one day, when they were *tête-à-tête*, "that you are quite a success? You were undoubtedly the lion at Mrs. Edwards's reception."

"I am glad to hear it," he laughed: "I have been thinking lately that I was an utter failure. You know I am adrift in the world."

His homelessness, as was inevitable, appealed to her woman's heart.

"We cannot let you think so," she quickly rejoined: "you know we want you to feel at home here."

Once she asked him to tell her something of his life beyond the narrow outline he had given the doctor; but he evaded an answer.

"I am glad you came from New York," she said to him one day: "I lived there when I was young, and I want you to tell me of the changes in my old haunts."

Fortunately, his confusion was covered by the entrance of a visitor; but on his way home he purchased a map of New York, and spent several evenings in hunting up and studying articles descriptive of the city. He began to be sorry that he had not named some obscure little town as his former home. He was constantly on his guard, however, and his conversation with the doctor was usually impersonal and always without reference to the past.

"I know him," the doctor often reflected, in thinking of his friend, "as intimately as I could know a brother; and yet of the details of his life I know next to nothing." And there was something about his friend that stopped his questions on his lips, although the doctor's stock of curiosity exceeded a little the average.

"The most remarkable thing about him," the doctor's ruminations would continue, "is that he is a specialist in so many different lines. He is a thorough French and German scholar, and has considerable acquaintance with several other languages; he is an authority on music and art; he is a deep student of history and of politics. He is an easy after-dinner orator and a ready conversationalist; and to all these

attractions he adds the physical accomplishments, for he swims, dances, and rides the wheel."

Indeed, it was the very multiplicity of his gifts that had puzzled Jason Hildreth himself in the choice of a career. He realized the necessity of doing something as soon as he had sufficiently recovered; for whatever property he might have possessed was lost to him now, and the small supply of cash he had with him would soon be exhausted. He tried in vain to discover what had been his occupation in the old forgotten life. That it was not the practice either of medicine or of law he soon decided; for, while the knowledge of these subjects that he possessed was more than the average, it was not sufficiently technical to be professional. Possibly he had been a professor in some college or academy; more probably he had been a gentleman of wealth and leisure.

Finding, however, that he had a facile pen, he devoted himself to journalistic work, with steadily increasing success; and after several months of alternating hope and despair, he obtained, through the influence of Dr. Richmond, a position on one of the great dailies, that solved for him the financial problem.

During all this time he had not abandoned the hope of discovering his identity. He had studied the papers of all sections of the country for cases of mysterious disappearance. He had even put detectives at work on his own case, without revealing his intense personal interest; but all his efforts had been unavailing.

Twice only he had been startled out of his self-possession by questions,—in both cases, those of the doctor.

In the first instance, he had been speaking of certain deductions from philological comparisons, when the doctor interrupted him.

"What is your college?" he said. "I have always fancied you were a Harvard man."

"I have thought so sometimes myself," was the unexpected response. Then, seeing his companion's look of astonishment, he hastened to add, "I mean, of course, I have had sufficient egotism to think I might pass for a Harvard graduate. In fact, I am self-educated."

The second inadvertence occurred when they were discussing some question of art.

"You have been to Europe, have you not?" the doctor asked.

"I think I must have been," was the rejoinder. "I beg your pardon," he went on in confusion: "how absent-minded I am! Of course I have been; but I was quite young at the time, and my impressions of the trip are unreliable."

Meantime the doctor had supplemented his aunt's social efforts in Jason's behalf by proposing his name at his clubs and showing him something of the Bohemian side of the city. He secured his entrance into the Golden Gate Club, the *Fin de Siècle*, and the Criterion Debating Club.

The Golden Gate Club was known by its detractors as the Club of the Two Hundred, being composed chiefly of the male members of fashionable society. It had extensive and elegant club-rooms in a desirable part of the city, and was noted for its suppers and banquets.

The Fin de Siècle was an out-door club, interested principally in bicycle-races. Its rooms included a fine gymnasium and baths.

The Criterion Club was the most exclusive, being limited to a membership of ten. It met twice a month in the homes of the members, to discuss some debatable subject, the members taking turns in furnishing the leading paper, and the others commenting upon it. It was one of the rules of the club that two men in the same profession or business should not belong to the club at the same time, the object being to secure as great a diversity of thought and personality as possible. The resignation of the editor, who had transferred his labors to fields east of the Rockies, provided the vacancy that enabled the doctor to propose his friend's name. The other members were a lawyer, a merchant, a prominent educator, a liberal clergyman, a Jewish rabbi, a professional politician holding a city office, a cartoonist, and a man of leisure who had devoted himself to social reform. Every shade of opinion on every conceivable subject was represented, from the most intense conservatism to the most extreme socialism, and from the rankest materialism to the most transcendental theosophy. The sole object of the club was the intellectual pleasure of its members; but once a year the feast of reason and the flow of soul were supplemented by terrapin and champagne.

Into this heterogeneous society Jason Hildreth was received as a kindred spirit; and he soon showed his mettle by a paper on "The Decadence of Literature," which was greeted with a storm of protestation and abuse.

He was also introduced to another phase of social semi-Bohemian life in the Thursday At Homes of Mrs. Ellery, the author of bright stories and sketches for Eastern and local journals. Here the social standard was neither monetary nor ancestral, but purely intellectual and artistic. The doctor had been admitted to her *salon*, as her friends were pleased to call it, by virtue of articles in well-known medical and scientific journals. Having herself a slight strain of French blood, and speaking the language fluently, she welcomed his friend with delight. Here he found authors, journalists, artists, musicians, reformers, and all the varieties of the New Woman, from lawyers and suffragists to directors of orphan asylums and chairmen of committees on sanitary reform. Mrs. Ellery herself was a charming woman, possessed of a diversity of talents, and an ideal hostess.

Jason Hildreth, awakened from a marvellous slumber in which no dreams of former pleasure were remembered, plunged into social life with the zest and enjoyment of a *débutant*. Yet it was evident from his every action that he was, to some extent at least, accustomed to the manner of life he was pursuing. Nor did he neglect his business interests. He soon made himself indispensable to the paper with which he was connected, and became known to the public as a strong and versatile writer.

His studies, too, absorbed a good deal of his attention, and time passed rapidly. He had accepted his strange situation philosophically, determined to extract all the enjoyment he could out of life, and to leave any possible discovery of his identity to chance and the future.

In the rare hours when he chanced to be alone and unoccupied, he had diverted himself by little trips about the beautiful bay. He had climbed the hills of Saucelito and roamed through the lovely valleys that lie at the foot of Mount Tamalpais; he had visited the fort at Alcatraz and the barracks on Angel Island, and interviewed the ship-builders in the quaint little village of Tiburon. He had fished for smelts from the wharves and gone in a canoe to shoot ducks among the tules.

The whole country about the bay was soon familiar to him; but nowhere did he find a locality that suggested to him the faintest association of ideas. He was sure that his home, wherever it had been, was far away from his present surroundings.

Often he had studied his face, but it suggested no memories to him. The finely chiselled features, the broad forehead, the deep eyes of clear blue, the fair brown hair and moustache, with their tendency to curl, looked back at him from the mirror with mocking familiarity. His well-knit, supple form and slender hands were a part of his personality; but the secret of his identity remained undisclosed.

But he threw off the burden of the mystery and eagerly grasped at the joys of the present. Everything was strange and delightful to him; he felt like a child that has come into possession of a multitude of toys. In his eagerness for the experiences of life, he crowded his days and nights with a variety of occupations, and suffered no time to slip through his hands without a tangible labor or enjoyment.

The winter passed, with its alternate rain and sunshine, the spring, with its profusion of flowers in the cañons of the foot-hills. There was scarcely a perceptible difference in temperature, and when the rains ceased the only changes in the weather came in the wind and the fog. Sometimes the hills and the bay, and the very streets and houses of the city, were covered with a heavy veil of mist; again, from every slope of the hilly streets the water swept its azure crescent about the land, its distant silver broken by picturesque islands, crowned with light-house or fort. The winter and the spring went by, and summer approached with no accession of heat and no difference from the winter save in the entire cessation of rain and a slight increase in the proportion of windy and foggy days. The new-comer marvelled more and more at the place where no fires were needed in winter, where overcoats and furs were worn in midsummer, and where thin clothing was practically unknown. The theatres remained open, and social life continued, though somewhat less zealously pursued in the absence of many of its high-priestesses in the mountains and bathing-resorts for their annual warming.

So nearly eight months went by, and the curtain was not lifted from Jason Hildreth's past. Then a strange thing happened.

He had left the doctor at the door of the club early in the evening, and had gone to the new lodgings he had recently taken. He had an engagement that evening at the theatre with Mrs. Reginald Edwards and her party, in which Miss Vaughn and the doctor were included. He ran up the steps to his room, lit the gas, and opened his valise to take out some article of apparel. In doing so, his hand inadvertently

struck something hard, like pasteboard, within the canvas lining of the valise. He felt it curiously, and found at length the edge of a pocket that he had not noticed before. Inserting his fingers in this and reaching down, he carefully drew out a heavy card. Turning it to the light, he uttered a great cry. It was the photograph of a beautiful girl, with broad low forehead and dark eyes. The sweet mouth smiled at him, and in a sudden rush of memory he pressed the face to his lips.

"Elizabeth!" he cried.

He sank into a chair under the light, and, holding the picture before him, gazed long and tenderly upon it. He knew it so well, the face of his beloved.

"*Ma petite chérie!*" he exclaimed, rapturously, again and again, as he gazed at the dear features.

Then a flood of memories filled heart and brain. The moments passed into hours, and he sat in the same place, immovable. His engagement was forgotten; the fortunes of Jason Hildreth fell from him like a dream. He was Charles de Blainville, looking on the pictured face of Elizabeth Howard.

As he sat in silent absorption, unconscious of his surroundings or of the lapse of time, the theatre-party in their box at the Baldwin wondered why the interesting young journalist had not made his appearance. Miss Vaughn was noticeably disappointed, while Dr. Richmond grew a trifle uneasy, and even thought of going to his rooms to look him up. It had struck him more than once that there was something peculiar about Jason Hildreth. He could not define the feeling, and he had never expressed it; but he was always conscious of the fact that, save for a few bare details, the entire history of his most intimate friend was a sealed book to him.

"She sings charmingly, does she not?" Mrs. Edwards was saying at his ear.

"Beg pardon," he returned, rousing himself from his thoughts. "Yes, it is very piquant," he added, as he caught the last trill from the stage.

He was glad when the performance was over and he had seen the ladies to their carriages and said good-night.

"I want to look up Hildreth," he explained to his aunt; "I am a little worried about him,—professionally."

"Dear boy," she said to herself, with a smile, as she sank back in the carriage cushions; "it is an ideal Damon and Pythias friendship."

Meantime, the doctor had turned quickly, and, hailing a car, went to his friend's lodgings.

He ran up the steps to his rooms and pushed himself unceremoniously through the door, that stood slightly ajar. Jason Hildreth sat under the gaslight, his eyes staring at a picture on his knee. His face, his attitude, expressed utter despair.

"Jason," the doctor exclaimed, "what is the matter with you, old man?"

He had entered the room, and placed his hand on his friend's shoulder.

Jason roused himself and looked up in the doctor's face.

"You are the very man I want," he said. "How did you happen to come?"

"*Fidus Achates*," laughed the doctor. "But what is the matter? Are you sick?" he added, more seriously.

"I wonder if I dare to trust you," the other muttered.

"Jason Hildreth," said his friend, somewhat sharply, "why should you distrust me?"

"On account of your profession," was the reply. "I will tell you my story and ask your help, if you will swear that you will not think me crazy, that you will not hand me over——"

"I don't belong to the lunacy commission," interrupted the doctor; "and, besides, I am your friend: so go ahead."

He had thrown himself into an arm-chair opposite his friend, and, crossing his knees, settled himself comfortably for the story.

"You have never seen any evidence of insanity——"

"Never," interrupted the doctor. "You have acted exactly like other men, except that you would never speak of your past, and I supposed you had a reason for that."

"What did you think, for instance, was the reason?" asked his friend.

"Well, the most plausible supposition was that it was a painful subject."

"That is not it," said Jason. "Can you think of no other reason?"

"Of course," returned the doctor, lightly, "you might be a nihilist 'abroad for your health;' but I have not discovered that a knowledge of Russian is among your numerous accomplishments; or you might be an anarchist preparing to blow the city into the bay——"

"Seriously," interrupted Jason, impatiently, "has no other reason ever suggested itself to your mind?"

"Not in connection with you," was the reply, in a tone that had become earnest. "If I did not know your character so intimately, I might have suspected the concealment of crime as a possible motive; but no one could live on such terms with you as I have done and tolerate such an idea a moment."

"But why should you have thought my past so painful?"

"Well, if you press me," rejoined the doctor, "perhaps some love-affair, the fickleness of some woman——"

"This is my *fiancée*," interrupted Jason, handing him the photograph,— "the best and most beautiful woman in the world."

The doctor took the picture curiously, and a look of deep admiration crossed his face.

"She is very beautiful," he said.

"She loves me," continued his friend, "and she has been waiting long months in vain for tidings of me."

"You cad, you!" spluttered the doctor, choking with wrath, "why have you not written to her? Why did you not let us send word to her when you were sick?"

"Because I could not," said Jason, sadly; "and I cannot now."

He buried his face in his hands and groaned.

"What is it?" asked the doctor, his voice changing to bewildered sympathy.

"You do not understand yet why I never told you anything of my past?"

The doctor shook his head impatiently.

"It was because," said Jason, slowly, looking in his eyes, "because I had forgotten it."

The doctor sprang to his feet with a cry.

"I have heard of such cases," he said, "but I never came across one before."

"Now," said Jason, angrily, "you must drop your professional interest for a personal one, or I will not tell you another word. I object to being considered a 'case,' when my life's happiness depends upon your help."

"Forgive me, Jason," said the doctor; "but possibly the consideration of your 'case' might help to a solution of the problem that seems to exist. But go on: I promise to think of you first as a friend."

"And you will not consider me an impostor because I named myself and constructed a slight biographical outline——"

"And your name is not Jason Hildreth?" demanded the doctor, with increasing astonishment.

"No," was the reply; "my name is Charles de Blainville, and I was born in Paris."

Then Jason told him the story. Occasionally the doctor interrupted him with a question; but for the most part he sat in rapt attention, listening to the strange tale of his friend. Midnight had passed, and since then the clock had struck twice, but they had not noticed it; for when the tale was ended, they talked over many plans for discovering the missing links in the chain of the story and so uniting the strangely sundered destinies of Charles de Blainville and Elizabeth Howard.

III.

As the man called Jason Hildreth had sat alone, looking at the picture on his knee, the life of Charles de Blainville unrolled like a panorama before him. He saw dimly, through the distance of years, a pretty villa in the suburbs of Paris: on the terrace stood a lovely lady, holding a little boy by the hand. The child was himself. A moment more, and a great dog bounded over the fence into the garden, and a gentleman passed through the gate and approached them. The child ran toward him, crying, "*Mon père, mon père.*"

The next thing he remembered was a long and stormy sea-voyage, during which his lovely mamma was lying always in her berth and his father stayed with her, while Annette, the nurse, took him on deck and sometimes scolded and slapped him. Then came a day when his mother held him closely in her arms, while his father wept beside them. Suddenly the arms about him relaxed and the face he kissed was cold.

The next day they wrapped her in a white shroud and read out of a book, while he stood near, grasping his father's hand tightly, for he was afraid. Then they lowered her into the waves, and he would have jumped over to follow her, had they not caught him and held him back.

He remembered no more till he was travelling in the cars with his father over a strange country and trying to understand the unfamiliar speech of the people. Then, with an exultant thrill that was new and distinct from anything he had felt in his other recollections, came the memory of his home,—the home he had known and loved for many years. It was a spacious old stone house, in the midst of great maples, and set on a hill in the suburbs of the city. A low wall of carefully kept hedge surrounded the garden, and the stone walks were bordered with violets and mignonette. There were no other flowers about the house; but across the street was a large private garden belonging to his father, in which were collected plants rare in that climate, such as magnolias, and cacti, and oleanders, planted in large tubs. Adjacent to the house and its grounds was the residence of a prominent judge in the city.

With the memory of these things, distinctly the family annals and traditions returned to his mind. His father had come of an aristocratic but ruined family, and was striving to rebuild its fortunes in the New World, with the hope of returning at some time to his beloved Paris, when he should be able to buy back the ancestral property and restore the family to its former grandeur. It was the one dream of his life, and his son was doubly loved, tenderly for his own sake, and proudly and jealously as the representative of a great line destined to see the restoration of the family fortunes and to pass on the name to future generations.

The name of Armand de Blainville was soon known in the city to which he had come as that of a wealthy man; but judged by his own standard he was yet poor. He owned a large iron-foundry, with a branch in a neighboring city; and a cluster of little cottages not far away on the hill belonged to him.

It was in this place that the little French boy had grown to manhood. He had been both a thoughtful and a happy child, and was never lonely, for he spent long hours in the companionship of his father, and, when his childish impulses moved him, he found playmates in the children of the gardener and the coachman, who lived in the tiny red brick cottages below. He had a little Shetland pony that he rode over the hills, and a faithful dog that accompanied him on his expeditions for nuts and autumn leaves. As he grew older, he chose for companions those of his school-mates whose tastes were congenial with his own; but his father was always his dearest and most appreciated friend. From his earliest childhood he had studied the French classics with his father, and his mind had fed on the tales of the prowess of his ancestors and the glory of his house.

Annette and Lucie, his mother's maid, had stayed with them until Lucie married and Annette died. By this time he had entered college, where he remained for two years. His vacations were spent at home

with his father, for whom he had always felt the deepest affection. He remembered upon these occasions how strangely the English speech of the new servants struck him in his home, where during all his boyhood's years he had heard nothing but the French tongue.

It was during his first vacation that he met Elizabeth Howard. She was visiting in the house that adjoined his father's. The first time he saw her, she was standing in the garden, a slim, graceful figure robed in white, with a dark face of the most exquisite beauty. He stood unseen behind the shrubbery of roses that separated the two gardens, and watched her until she turned at last and went back to the house. Then he sought his father. He found him in the library, engrossed in his favorite volume of Racine. He approached him and took his hand in his affectionate, boyish way.

"Father," he said, "who is the beautiful lady I saw in the garden?"

"It is Miss Howard," was the reply,—*"Mrs. Stewart's niece."*

"Will you take me to call on her this evening?" the son asked.

"Yes," he answered, simply.

Then he arose, and, placing his hands on his son's shoulders, looked at him with searching eyes, shadowed a little by sadness.

"My son," he said, "you will not leave your father?"

"Mon père!" was all the son could say at once. Then he flung his arms around his father's neck.

"Never will I leave you," he cried. "But some time if I should bring you a daughter——"

"And she is of good family and at least moderate fortune, I shall be glad to welcome her. I would rather you should choose a woman of your own people; but I might have foreseen it would be otherwise when I brought you here."

That evening seemed to young de Blainville the opening of the gates of Paradise. The judge and Mrs. Stewart engaged his father in conversation, while Miss Howard discussed with him music and literature and art. They talked, too, with the enthusiasm of youth, of religion, social reform, and the future of the race. They even spoke of love, as something in the abstract, beautiful, and as yet unattained by them. Indeed, there was scarcely a subject upon which they did not touch, from the Hindoo drama and recent advances in the study of bacteriology to the latest improved methods of heating and lighting houses. Miss Howard even tried to converse with him in French, with a charming accent and naïve blunders that delighted him.

Before they went away, his father asked Miss Howard to play for them. Without apology or demur, she sat down at the piano and gave them Wagner's *"Ride of the Valkyrie."* The unearthly sweetness of the music thrilled him as music had never done before. When its last wild notes had died away, the music glided in a dulcet improvisation into the serene rapture of Beethoven's *"Moonlight Sonata."* The little circle of auditors sat spellbound till the last notes dropped softly into silence. Then Mr. de Blainville asked her to sing.

She rose from the piano, and, taking a guitar from the case, sat down in a low rocker by the window. After a faint, rippling prelude, she began *"Die Lorelei."* As she sang, her face impassioned with the

weird power of the music, her slender fingers caressing the strings with deft touches, it seemed to the young man who sat watching her that she was "die schönste Jungfrau," who was singing away his soul. But he knew that the comparison was unworthy; for her face was as pure and noble as it was beautiful, and in her clinging white dress she might better have suggested St. Cecilia.

As she rose at their departure, a rose-bud dropped from her hair. He stooped quickly and picked it up.

"May I keep it as a souvenir of this evening's pleasure?" he asked, and she smiled her consent.

After this, there was scarcely a day that he did not see her. There was only a wall of rose-bushes between the two gardens, and Charles soon forgot that it was intended as a dividing line. They read together and talked together, rode horseback and played tennis and took long rides on de Blainville's new tandem bicycle. It was one evening when they were in a row-boat on the river, drifting down with the current, that the young man softly repeated the words,—

"Seele des Menschen,
Wie gleichst du dem Wasser;
Schicksal des Menschen,
Wie gleichst du dem Wind."

"Do you know the words?" he added, softly.

"Yes," she replied: "they are from Goethe. Won't you write them down for me?"

"If you will write the translation under them," he said.

He drew a paper and fountain-pen from his pocket and wrote the words in German script; and under them she wrote the translation:

"Soul of man,
How like the water!
Fate of man,
How like the wind!"

"It is a little free," she said, as she handed it to him, "but it is more poetical than a literal rendering."

Then he claimed the paper as his property, and, despite her laughing protest, put it in his pocket.

His vacation drew near its close, and with it Miss Howard's visit, which had been prolonged far beyond her original intention. One evening, as father and son sat in the library before the lamps were lit, the young man spoke of something that had been in his mind for several weeks past.

"Father," he said, "I should like to give a farewell lawn-party for Elizabeth."

The elder man's eyes sought his son's face in the dusk.

"So you call her Elizabeth," he said, musingly. Then, rousing himself, he addressed his son.

"Excuse me, *mon cher*," he said; "of course your wish shall be carried out."

Armand de Blainville never did things by halves; and the house

and gardens were a dream of beauty the night they were decorated in honor of Elizabeth Howard. Palm-leaves and lace-like ferns from the conservatory adorned the walls; the house was fragrant with tropical lilies and Cape jasmine; rare potted plants and jardinières peeped from corners and nooks among pictures and statuary and fine bric-à-brac. In the garden, platforms had been erected for dancing, and the grounds were brilliantly illuminated with Chinese lanterns and electric lights.

Elizabeth had come over early with her aunt to see the decorations, and Charles had conducted her through the grounds and the house, leaving his father and Mrs. Stewart to follow at their leisure.

Elizabeth had never looked so beautiful to him before. She had abandoned her favorite white and pale shades for an elegant dress of yellow velvet and black lace, that brought out the beauty of her clear dark skin and the splendor of her eyes. Charles knew, from the admiring glance his father had given her, that he thought her worthy of the long line of de Blainvilles. As yet, he himself had spoken no decisive word; he had waited for this night, half with design, and half from hesitation to break the delicious spell of unacknowledged love.

She paused at the threshold of a large room on the second floor, whose walls were covered with portraits, and looked at him inquiringly.

"They are my ancestors," he said, with a smile. "My father thinks more of them than the Roman ever did of his lares and penates."

She stepped into the room with mingled curiosity and awe.

"Do you know what they are to me?" she said, with a half-smile. "They are simply the hereditary forces that have contributed to your personality. For this reason they are interesting."

"How deep is the interest?" he said, with flushing face. But she was absorbed in contemplating the portraits, and did not hear him. There were soldiers and statesmen who had fought bravely and thought wisely for their country; there were famous court beauties and ladies of *salons*.

"What are you thinking?" he said, at last.

"I was thinking," she said, seriously, "that you have a distinguished ancestry, and that you are worthy of it; but it would be inconceivably interesting to trace the line back to the primeval race and see," she added, mischievously, "how the trilobite has developed into the king-crab."

"You do me too much honor," he said, with a mocking bow; "but if I am to be an exponent of the law of evolution, I should prefer, at least, not to be considered crabbed."

She made a grimace over the pun and turned to leave the room; but he caught her hand.

"Elizabeth," he said, desperately, "you have said I was worthy of my ancestry; am I—am I worthy of you?"

Her raillery was gone in a moment: she looked at him with serious eyes.

"What do you mean?" she said, simply.

"I mean that I love you," he cried, drawing her to him passionately.

Two hours later, in the midst of the music and the glare of lights, he led her from the waltz into a cool, retired arbor, where the moon-light fell softly through the rose-leaves on their faces, and, without other words, quoted to her a passage from Browning:

"You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word."

The next year of his college life passed quickly and happily. Elizabeth's father, a wealthy merchant of a neighboring city, had given his consent to his daughter's marriage, which was to be deferred till Charles had finished his university course. By that time, his father thought, he would have accumulated sufficient for them to return to France and buy back the family estates. Twice during the year, at Christmas and in the spring, Charles had gone to the city where Elizabeth lived and seen her in her home. He was warmly received by her father, a stern, dignified man, who took no trouble to conceal the fact that he felt honored by the proposed alliance.

Thus time passed until, near the close of his second year, Charles was called home by the sudden and serious illness of his father.

He found him lying in his room, emaciated, ghastly, with the shadow of death already upon him. He held out his hand without a smile.

"Have they told you, my boy?" he said.

Charles knelt by the bed and took the wasted hand between his own.

"They told me only that you were sick," he said. "I had hoped you would be better when I came."

"I will never be better," was the response; "but that does not matter so much. There is a heavier calamity than this in store for you. My son, my son," he sobbed, "we are ruined."

Under the shock of the realization of his father's approaching death, any other misfortune seemed of little consequence to the young man.

"*Mon père, mon père,*" he cried, with the old intonation of his boyhood, "it would not matter if I might only have you."

"Ah, Charles," sighed the father, placing his trembling hand on the bowed head of his son, "you do not understand. The de Blainvilles, the family estates——"

His voice sank to a moan. The son did not offer him comfort in words. He knew the dream of his life was broken; and the dreams of the old cannot be restored.

"It was those last unfortunate investments," continued the elder man. "I thought they would bring me threefold returns; instead of that, everything is gone,—everything. I thought our exile was nearly over; instead of that, I am dying in a foreign land."

Moments passed in silence. The odor of mignonette came through the open window; somewhere among the maples a bird called to his mate.

"Charles," the father murmured at last, "I can do nothing but pass on my work to you. Will you promise me, before I die, that you will try——"

"Yes, father," returned the son, pressing the feeble hand that sought his; "I will work for the fulfilment of your hopes,—and for Elizabeth."

"Ah, yes, Elizabeth," sighed the old man. "My poor boy, your misfortune has fallen upon you with double bitterness."

A few days later he died. Nervous prostration and heart-failure, the doctors said; but the son knew he had died of a broken heart.

The day of his father's death he received a letter from Simeon Howard. It stated briefly that, owing to the changed circumstances of the young man, he was to consider an alliance with Mr. Howard's daughter as out of the question. The following day came a letter from Elizabeth. It was full of indignant protest against her father's action, and the assurance of her unaltered affection.

"I will marry you," she said, "though my father should cast me off and we must live in poverty. For what is poverty of the purse to emptiness of the heart?"

"You must be patient, dear," he had written in reply, "till I can win a home for you. I am doubly pledged to success,—for the fulfilment of my father's wishes, and for you."

And so, when he had settled his father's affairs, paying his liabilities to the last cent, and had arranged for the storage of the few personal effects he had not parted with, he took the thousand dollars that remained of his father's fortune and set out for California. There, he thought, would be less competition and a better chance of survival in the struggle.

Elizabeth had come to the train to see him, as he passed through the city where she lived; and, notwithstanding the curious spectators, he had held her a moment in his arms and listened to her broken words of love.

"*Ma petite chérie!*" he called back to her with a choking voice, as the train pulled out of the station and he saw her wave her hand in mute farewell. Then the white-robed figure dimmed and disappeared, and a mist fell before his eyes.

IV.

Such was the life that Jason Hildreth recalled as he sat alone in his room under the gaslight; and thus, with many details, he repeated it to Dr. Richmond. It was perfect, save for one thing: in all his recollections, with the exception of the villa in the suburbs of Paris, there was no locality. What city it was in which he had grown to manhood, what the name of the college he had attended, and where

Elizabeth lived, he did not know. He had a vague idea that his home had been in one of the North Central States; and he remembered that Elizabeth lived half a day's journey west.

On first thought, it seemed to the two friends that it would be easy enough to fill out the blanks in the story. Such a man as Armand de Blainville must have been known in the State in which he lived. It would seem easy enough to locate his iron-foundries, and thus to get the key to the whole situation. Then, too, it would seem easy enough to find the name of Charles de Blainville in the printed college lists of students. So Jason Hildreth, as he was still known to the world, and still called, out of caution, by the doctor, sent for directories and college reports from all parts of the country, and in the evenings the two friends immured themselves in Jason's study and sought for the names of the two de Blainvilles. But in vain. From the larger cities they had gone to the towns and the villages, and from the larger universities to the small colleges. At last, after several weeks of arduous work, they sat one night staring across the table into each other's eyes.

"Are you sure," asked the doctor at length, "are you sure the name is de Blainville? It might be de Mandeville, or de Joinville, or any other kind of a ville."

"I am sure," said Jason, solemnly; "as sure as I am of my existence. For heaven's sake," he added, petulantly, "don't look at me with your professional expression."

"I beg your pardon," said the doctor, with a laugh. He was already half convinced that Jason's story was a hallucination. And yet the consistency of it, and the existence of the photograph and the bit of German verse, as well as his friend's undoubted sanity in all matters of daily life, caused him to hold his judgment in suspension.

"There is some mistake in the printed lists," said Jason. "I am going to write to the postmasters of the most probable cities, and send messages to Elizabeth through newspaper personals, and—engage a detective."

"All at once?" queried the doctor, with a smile.

"Well, I will leave the detective for the last resort," returned his friend; "but I have a conviction that it will come to that."

And his fear was correct; but the detective's investigations failed as completely as had all other means of inquiry.

The greatest blow to Jason's hopes was a polite letter he received from a Paris official in answer to a letter of inquiry.

"I regret to inform Monsieur," it said, "that no record can be found of the branch of the de Blainville family that Monsieur represents. I regret also that it has been found impossible to locate the villa of which Monsieur speaks."

"To think," said Jason, when he had read the letter to his friend, "that the family of de Blainville should have dropped out of the memory of people like that. Such a letter as this would have killed my father. It is useless," he added, "to make any more inquiries. I see that I must wait till I am rich enough to travel and locate things myself."

Miss Vaughn began to complain that Jason was neglecting her,

and that he was adding insult to injury by monopolizing the society of the doctor.

"It was very nice to have two nephews," she said to him, reproachfully; "but I decidedly object to having none at all."

They were sitting before the open grate in the back parlor, where a merry fire blazed; for Miss Vaughn had never become sufficiently acclimated to dispense with fire in the rainy weather.

"You must forgive me, dear Miss Vaughn," was the rejoinder; "I have been much troubled of late, or I should not have been so ungrateful to you after all your kindness to me."

"Is it bad news from home?" she said, gently, looking up with her quick sympathy.

For one moment, Jason was tempted to tell her his troubles; but he restrained himself. He knew his story would grieve her; at the same time, he felt that his secret was safer with the doctor as his sole confidant. So he answered her evasively.

"It is worse than that," he said: "it is no news at all."

"But, my dear boy, no news is good news," she hastened to rejoin; "and, besides, you told me that you had no home ties."

"No immediate family," Jason admitted; "but friends in whom I am interested."

Miss Vaughn frowned slightly and looked in the glowing coals. She was not without the match-making propensity of her sex, and had in her mind at that moment a charming girl of her acquaintance, who was a millionaire in her own right.

"You need society to divert you," she said. "You must go to Mrs. Edwards's musicale to-morrow. I want you to meet her niece, Miss Gordon, of Los Angeles. You would certainly please each other."

He saw the drift of her thought, and recoiled from it. In his highly wrought state, the mere suggestion seemed like sacrilege to the memory of Elizabeth.

"You are very kind," he said, rising; "but I hardly think I shall be able to go. I have important business to attend to."

And he left her a little piqued at the frustration of her plans.

The days and weeks passed monotonously for him, yet filled with a feverish expectation and impatience. The mystery surrounding his life absorbed his thoughts and cast a shadow on the pleasures of the brief months of utter forgetfulness. His books and his scientific investigations no longer interested him; his work had become a burden. He would go out to the Park or the Cliff House alone and wander about for hours, with head bent and hands clasped behind him; or he would sit on a bench in one of the city squares, absorbed in thought, until the doctor, or some other acquaintance, chanced to pass and to banter him on his preoccupation.

Gradually hope died out of his heart, and a settled apathy seemed to possess him. The doctor urged him to throw it off, insisted upon taking him to places of amusement, and forced him to give some attention to his favorite studies. But there were always protests and cynical reflections on the vanities of life, where formerly there had been nothing but good-natured compliance and the zest of enjoyment.

"To think," he said bitterly to the doctor one day, "that I should remember the entire middle voice of my Greek verbs and forget the name of the place where Elizabeth lives."

And with this commentary on the value of learning he pushed his books impatiently away and looked despairingly at his friend.

"Come with me to-night to see 'The Three Guardsmen,'" was the only response; and, in lieu of anything else to occupy his thoughts, Jason consented.

A year had now passed since Jason's memory of his life returned to him; and in all that time no incident had occurred to confirm his recollections or put him on the track of discovery. But as he was sitting in the theatre with Dr. Richmond, something happened to rouse his crushed hopes and instigate him to fresh investigations.

In spite of himself, his attention had become fixed upon the stage, and it was only between the acts that he suffered it to wander about the house. He bowed to Mrs. Edwards and Miss Gordon, to whom Miss Vaughn had at last succeeded in introducing him; but he glanced away and did not see the motion inviting him to their box.

As his eyes passed carelessly over the throng, he chanced to glance in a large mirror on one of the side walls of the room. Two ladies had risen and were leaving the house.

"Come," he cried, grasping his friend's arm so excitedly that the latter winced: "Elizabeth is walking down the aisle."

"Are you crazy?" muttered the doctor; for the curtain was rising, and he was greatly interested in the play.

"Look in the mirror," returned his friend, as he pushed by him impatiently: "the tall dark girl in black."

The doctor looked in the direction indicated, and started as he saw the reflection of what was surely the original of the photograph of Elizabeth. He snatched up his overcoat and hastily followed his friend. He found Jason standing in front of the door, staring down the street disconsolately.

"I have missed her," he said, in despair. "A carriage drove away just as I got to the door. It must have been theirs."

He would not rest until he had procured a messenger-boy and sent to the papers personals addressed to E. H. and signed C. de B. The next morning he examined the leading hotel registers for the name of Elizabeth Howard, but without success.

Two days later, as the two friends were walking up a residence street, a little before midnight, on their way home from the club, they passed a house, faintly lighted up, from which issued the sound of a piano. Jason stopped in front of the door as the familiar chords fell upon his ear; and just then a sweet voice began, "Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten." He would have sworn it was Elizabeth singing "Die Lorelei."

He sprang up the steps and had his hand on the bell, when he was pulled back by his cooler-headed friend.

"What are you doing?" the doctor demanded, sharply.

"It is Elizabeth," gasped Jason.

"Well, suppose it is," said his friend; "you cannot ring at this

hour of the night. Look at the number of the house, and come to-morrow morning to see about it."

Jason stood a moment irresolute, then turned and walked away with his friend. As they passed out of the glare of the electric light into the shadows of the street, he heard the sweet voice singing,—

"Ich glaube, die Wellen verschlingen
Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn."

"Oh, God!" he groaned; "if the waves should destroy my little bark before——"

Then the bit of German verse she had translated broke in upon his thought, and he murmured,—

"Soul of man,
How like the water!
Fate of man,
How like the wind!"

His broken dreams that night were full of visions. Elizabeth, like the Lorelei, sat on the rocks above the swift current of the Rhine; but the locks she combed were raven instead of gold. And as she sat singing, he tried in vain to steer to her his little boat against the current; and all the while the black waves were saying to him, in mournful human voices,—

"Soul of man,
How like the water!"

And the wind moaned about him, with a despairing cry,—

"Fate of man,
How like the wind!"

Then, as he forced his way across the waves at last, and his frail bark shivered on the rocks, the beautiful woman bent over him with mocking laughter and cried, "I am not Elizabeth Howard; I am only the Lorelei," and her black tresses turned to locks of gold, and her dark eyes to cold blue, like the sea.

He rose at daybreak. The time of waiting till a suitable hour to call seemed interminable to him. Then he was afraid that he would lose her at the last,—that she would elude him like the Lorelei of his dream. He lingered over his toilet, looking anxiously at the face reflected in the glass.

"I wonder if she will find me changed," he thought. "I certainly look older than I should be. Probably the sickness and the anxiety over the mystery have been the cause of that."

He never doubted that she had been true to him and would be rejoiced to see him. How she came to be in San Francisco he could not imagine. He did not remember ever to have seen before the lady that was with her at the theatre. Was it possible, could it be, that she had found his silence insupportable, and had come to San Francisco to find him? His heart beat fast at the thought.

He went to the restaurant where he usually breakfasted, and played absently with his fork and spoon till his coffee and steak grew cold. He did not look at the morning paper, except to glance at the personal notes and advertisements. His personal to E. H. had not been answered.

At last, after numerous consultations of his watch, he decided that he might venture to go to the house.

He found it a private boarding-house on the corner of two hilly streets. His ring was answered by a colored boy.

"Is Miss Elizabeth Howard in?" he asked.

"No, sah," was the instant reply: "I don't know the lady, sah."

"Are you sure she does not board here?" exclaimed Jason, in surprise.

"Sure, sah," the boy said.

"I would like to see the lady of the house," said the bewildered young man.

The boy conducted him into a sitting-room opening out of the vestibule. He sat down by the window and looked about him, mentally condemning the conventionalities that delayed even for a few moments his meeting with Elizabeth. On the opposite side of the room stood a grand piano, littered with music, as though it had been recently used. While he was wondering if he could find "*Die Lorelei*" among the scattered sheets, the landlady entered, a pretty little woman, who looked at him inquiringly.

"I understood from your boy," said Jason, "that Miss Elizabeth Howard does not board here."

"No," was the reply, "I have no boarder of that name."

"But she was here last night," insisted Jason, "and perhaps you will be able to give me her address."

"If she was here last night," the landlady replied, "she must have been calling on Mrs. Hanford. I heard Mrs. Hanford singing quite late. But I have never heard her speak of the lady you mention."

"Can I see Mrs. Hanford?" inquired Jason, eagerly, and, as he spoke, the name stirred him faintly with a thrill of memory.

"I am sorry," said the landlady, "but she and her aunt went to Pacific Grove on the early train this morning. They are making a tour of the State."

"And you can tell me nothing of Miss Howard?" asked Jason, struggling to suppress his disappointment.

"Nothing," was the reply.

"Do you know Mrs. Hanford's address at Pacific Grove?" he asked.

"I think she intends to stay at the El Carmelo Hotel for a while," answered the landlady, "and at the Del Monte later."

In less than an hour after Jason left the house, he stood in the Fourth and Townsend Street *dépôt*, satchel in hand, waiting for the train. He had obtained leave of absence from the office on the plea of urgent business; but he had found no time to send word to the doctor of his plans.

As he sat in the train, impatient of the time that must intervene

before he might hope to hear of Elizabeth, he did not regret his impulsive action. True, he reflected, he might have written to Mrs. Hanford and asked her for Elizabeth's address; and if she were still in the city he would probably be able to see her as soon as he could hope to by following the plan he had adopted. But he had no certainty that Mrs. Hanford, in the change and excitement of travel, would reply to the letter of a stranger; and, besides, in his present state of nervous tension, it seemed impossible to him to sit down and wait calmly for the occurrence of events. He craved action and longed to assist the progress of his destiny.

Through the beautiful country that lies south of San Francisco, with its orchards and vineyards and its prosperous little towns, through the fertile sweep of the Santa Clara valley, where the air grew warm and balmy with the breath of summer, that is chilled before it reaches the city on its mist-hung hills, through its metropolis, beautiful San José, the Garden City of the West, on into the wilder ways and the spicier air of the northern coast of the county of Monterey, he passed with unseeing eyes. The passengers on the train were chiefly pleasure-seekers who were going in parties to their favorite coast resorts; and the silent man, with his impatient, preoccupied air, sat among them alone with his strange thoughts. Even the beauties of Del Monte, the high tower and gabled roofs of the hotel rising above the foliage of the magnificent grounds, in which the wonders of nature and of art had been marvellously combined, aroused him only to the thought that he was near his journey's end.

It was evening when he reached Pacific Grove; a cold, foggy evening, with the wind blowing from the bay. He scanned eagerly the faces of the people that crowded the little station, summer visitors, most of them, who had come from the hot valleys to enjoy the cool air and the sea-baths of the resort. The face that he looked for with wild, unreasoning hope was not there.

He took the El Carmelo cab and was soon jolting over the road between rows of white tents and pretty cottages to the hotel. As he jumped from the carriage he glanced rapidly over the long veranda, where people were sitting alone and in groups, absorbed in idle meditation, or chatting together with the easy familiarity of a sea-side hotel. But the face he sought was not there.

He went into the office and engaged a room. As he bent over the register to write his name, he started back with a smothered cry of surprise. The last name on the page was Mrs. Laurence Hanford, in the handwriting of Elizabeth Howard. He drew the scrap of German verse surreptitiously from his pocket and compared the writing of the translation with that in the register. They were indisputably the same. Again the name struck some hidden chord of memory; and this time an explanation of its familiarity forced itself with sickening certainty upon his mind. Laurence Hanford must be some one whom Elizabeth had known and whose name she had mentioned to him in the days of their courtship. Then, after his own disappearance, as time went on and she heard nothing of him, she had thought him false or perhaps dead, and had suffered herself to be consoled by her old friend.

He stopped with the pen poised in the air. Perhaps there was some mistake. Perhaps Elizabeth was in the hotel and had registered for her friend. Women do not like to write with their gloves on, he reflected, grasping at the pitiable straw.

"Is Miss Elizabeth Howard in the hotel?" he asked the clerk.

"No; I do not know the lady," was the reply.

"And Mrs. Hanford," continued Jason, with some hesitation, "did she write her name herself?"

"Yes," said the clerk, a little impatiently. "She registered for herself and the other lady. They came this morning."

Jason glanced at the name above, Mrs. Gerald Matheson, and saw that it was in the same familiar writing.

"What does Mrs. Hanford look like?" Jason went on, regardless of the clerk's look of surprise.

"She is dark and very handsome," was the curt reply, as his interlocutor wrote the name of Jason Hildreth under that of Mrs. Hanford.

Jason went to his room, uncertain what to do. He must know—he must find out—if Mrs. Hanford was Elizabeth Howard.

"If she has forgotten me so soon," he muttered, "if she has married so soon after her vow of love till death,—and after death,—then henceforth I shall be Jason Hildreth to the world. My father is dead; let the line of de Blainville die with him. Elizabeth is dead to me. There is no link to hold me to the past. I will live a new life under a new name."

Then all his soul rose in protest against the thought.

"She is not untrue," he said; "she cannot be untrue. There is some terrible mistake. Oh, Elizabeth, my love, my love!"

He buried his face in his hands and groaned.

Meantime, Mrs. Laurence Hanford sat by the window in her room, looking absently out upon the plat of flowers in front of the hotel. Her face was pensive to sadness, but with its broad low brow and brilliant black eyes was extremely beautiful. A recent novel she had been making pretence of reading had fallen face down on the floor; her hands, on which flashed several rare jewels, were clasped loosely in her lap. She had sat thus for many moments without speaking.

Her aunt, who was arranging some flowers in a vase on the table, broke the silence a little impatiently.

"I don't know what is the matter with you lately, my dear," she said, "you are so *distracted*."

The younger woman turned her head with a slight start, and, bending over, picked up the neglected book and laid it on the table.

"I cannot help thinking, Aunt Flora," she replied, "of the personal in the San Francisco papers. The initials were E. H. and C. de B. They might stand for Elizabeth Howard and Charles de Blainville. It is very strange."

"You have the most fantastic imagination in the world," said her aunt, with evident annoyance. "It may be a coincidence; it cannot possibly be anything more."

Mrs. Matheson was stout and blonde; and her fair face flushed as

she spoke. Mrs. Hanford noticed it, and wondered at herself for taking cognizance of such trifles.

"But he called her '*ma petite chérie*,'" she persisted. "I wish I had answered it."

"Well," ejaculated Mrs. Matheson, "I do not understand you. A widow still in black and answering newspaper advertisements——"

"Aunt," cried her niece, rising, with flashing eyes, "you know it is because I think this may be in some way connected——"

But her passion subsided in a burst of tears. The elder woman dropped her flowers, and, going to her niece, put her arms about the sobbing form and drew it to her breast.

"Forgive me, my dear," she said. "I should remember how you have suffered."

V.

Half a dozen different plans of action had suggested themselves to Jason Hildreth during the long hours he lay awake that night. He thought he would send Mrs. Hanford his card and ask for an interview; then he had decided to send simply the name, Charles de Blainville: at last, however, he decided to leave the meeting to chance, and meanwhile to see Mrs. Hanford before she knew of his presence. Were she indeed Elizabeth, if he should present himself unexpectedly to her she would certainly betray to him her indifference or her love.

Accordingly, he breakfasted early, before the ladies were downstairs, and ensconced himself with a book and a cigar in a shady nook of the veranda. He drew his hat down over his face, and depended upon his beard, which he was sure he had not worn before his sickness, as sufficient disguise until he chose to reveal himself.

His neighbor at the *table d'hôte* soon joined him, and accepted the cigar Jason offered him. He was a slight, blond man, young and somewhat flippant. Jason instinctively disliked him, but it was not worth while to be rude to him; besides, he might give him some information; for Jason had already discovered that he was familiar with the gossip of the place. He therefore greeted him pleasantly, and was immediately rewarded for his trouble.

"Have you seen the rich widow?" the new-comer asked, carelessly, as he sank lazily into a huge rocker and crossed his feet on the balustrade of the veranda.

"Whom do you mean?" asked Jason, quickly.

"Mrs. Hanford," his companion rejoined. "She came down yesterday, and is already making quite a furor. She's confoundedly handsome, and they say the ducats count up handsomely too. I've a notion to go in for her myself."

The speaker smiled complacently: Jason could have struck him for his insolence.

"By George, there she comes now," the young man added, looking toward the door.

Jason looked up: as he did so, his heart gave a leap, and then stood

still. In an instant he had recognized the younger of the two ladies who came out on the veranda. She was tall and dark, with broad low brow and brilliant eyes. She was dressed in black, and the beautiful face wore an expression of sadness he had never seen on it before.

"Elizabeth, Elizabeth!" his heart cried out; but he controlled himself. As the two ladies crossed the veranda and sauntered slowly down the street, he turned to his companion.

"Did her money come from her husband?" he asked.

"Yes," was the response. "They say he lived only a short time after he married her. She has been a widow a year or so."

"She must have married shortly after I came away," thought Jason, bitterly, "and for money. And yet she could speak to me of preferring poverty of the purse to emptiness of the heart."

His companion talked on, detailing the hotel gossip, as from time to time different guests appeared and either settled themselves on the long veranda or followed Mrs. Hanford and her companion down the street toward the beach; but Jason did not hear him. Becoming aware of his inattention by his companion's impatient repetition of a question, he excused himself and started down toward the bay.

"Queer fish," said the young man to himself, as he watched Jason's figure disappear down the street. "Struck by the widow, too, evidently; but it must have been a lightning-stroke."

He shrugged his shoulders, and sauntered over to a group of girls who were posing in various attitudes in the veranda rocking-chairs.

Meantime Jason had reached the bluff above the bathing beach and looked down on the scene below.

It was full of animation and the unconscious abandon of idleness and pleasure. The water rolled in softly lapping waves on the little curving stretch of sand shut in by jutting rocks; beyond, to the left, the cliff of Lovers' Point projected into the bay; away to the right, beyond Mussel Point, glimmered in the uncertain sunlight the white coast of Monterey. From the lookout and the bath-house broke the sound of merry voices; the beach itself was filled with people, sitting or lying on the sand and watching the bathers. In an instant Jason had recognized Elizabeth and her aunt, at the farther end of the beach, the latter seated with her back against a rock, and Elizabeth lying on the sand with her head in the older woman's lap. He felt a strange tightening of the heart; and he passed on, for he wanted to be alone.

He passed several beaches and a succession of high cliffs, wandering on till he came to the natural arch of stone a mile or two out of the town. It was high tide; the waters billowed and roared through the great gate-way of the rocks; while beyond, on the foam-capped waves, floated two tiny boats, with white sails gleaming in the sun.

Jason sat down on a projecting rock, with his face turned seaward. His mood was in sympathy with the weird loneliness of his surroundings: the surge of the tide, broken by the massive passage through which it rolled; the low wail of the wind; the hoarse shriek of the sea-gull that skimmed over the surface of the water, its shadow fluctuating in the waves below. It seemed to him that the whole world was

sad and full of mist, and that all lives, which had once appeared to him so many opportunities of unutterable joy, had become hopeless tragedies.

He did not know how long he had been sitting thus, sunk in bitter thought, when he heard voices behind him, on the path above. He listened with strained attention and fast-beating heart. Elizabeth was speaking.

"I love the sea," she said; "and yet it seems to me the materialization of all the sadness of the world. The lap of the tide and the sweep of the wind are like the voice of the *Zeitgeist*, the time-spirit, in sorrow. Then, too, it suggests the uncertainty of the eternities, before and after our little span of life."

She paused a moment, then, in low, tense tones, repeated the familiar words,—

"Seele des Menschen,
Wie gleichst du dem Wasser;
Schicksal des Menschen,
Wie gleichst du dem Wind."

Jason bent his head lower over his breast, and a dry sob shook his form. Oh, the irony of her remembering those words, when she had ceased to love him!

"You are too sad for so young a woman, my dear," a calm voice broke the silence.

"But don't you know," the familiar voice continued, "again these seas seem to me like the visible barrier of death, beyond which *he* is waiting for me. Oh, my love, my love, all others were shadows to me when you came; you were the only reality, the only one I ever truly loved."

Her voice thrilled with passion and despair, and every word fell on the heart of Jason like the blow of a lash.

"But, my child," persisted her aunt, "you are young and rich and beautiful. It cannot be that love will remain forever shut out of your life. Sorrow softens with time, and I am sure there is happiness yet in store for you."

"Aunt Flora," her companion broke in vehemently, "never suggest that to me again. The thought of a second marriage is hateful to me: my love will always be with the dead."

"Hush, hush, my dear," the elder lady interposed; "there is a man down there on the rocks."

And the man sat with head bent on his breast till he heard their voices and their footsteps die away in the distance. Then he rose wearily and started back toward the town.

"It is all over," he said to himself; "it is all over."

He drew a folded paper from his pocket, and, tearing it in two, gave the pieces to the wind. An hour later, he sat in the San Francisco train and watched the curving shore-line disappear in a curtain of mist.

At the same time, Mrs. Laurence Hanford and her aunt, returning from the light-house, stopped again at the arch. They descended from the bank above, and, while Mrs. Matheson sat on the rocks, the younger

lady climbed to the top of the arch, and sat there, breathing in the full breath of the wind. Her mood had changed; she had given way to the wild exhilaration that some natures experience from the influence of the sea. A great wave broke on the rocks, and a faint spray blew in her face.

"I feel like a stormy petrel," she cried: "I should like to ride the foam and fly in the wake of the wind."

Her aunt smiled at her enthusiasm, pleased with the rich color that had mounted in her cheeks.

At last she descended from her somewhat dangerous perch, jumping lightly over the rocks till she stood by her aunt's side.

"This is where our solitary man was sitting," she said, "absorbed in dreams. I wonder what he was thinking of."

Her aunt rose, and they started toward the bank above.

"What is this?" said the young lady, lightly, as she stooped and picked up two pieces of paper that had lodged between the rocks. She fitted the pieces together and looked at the words. Suddenly the roar of the sea seemed to deepen and thunder in her ears; the arch, the water, and the curving shore circled about her till they became like wheels of fire.

"My God!" she gasped, as she sank down on the rocks with the pieces of paper clutched convulsively in her hands.

"What is it?" cried her aunt, running to her and putting her arm around her trembling form.

"This," was the reply, as Mrs. Hanford held the scraps of paper toward her aunt. "His writing and mine. We wrote it one night on the river, in the boat,—'*Seele des Menschen*'—"

Her voice became choked; she stopped and stared wildly at her aunt.

"What can it mean?" she went on. "I cannot think. It cannot be—that man; at least he must have known— Oh, auntie, auntie, tell me what to do."

That night, as Dr. Richmond sat in his study, reading the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he was startled by the opening of the door behind him. He looked back, and jumped to his feet with a cry. Jason Hildreth stood before him, with drawn, white face, and eyes that were set and expressionless as the eyes of the dead. The doctor had to shake himself to get rid of the illusion that it was only the apparition of his friend that stood before him.

"What have you been doing to yourself, man?" he cried, as he seized him by the arms and drew him toward an easy-chair.

Jason sat down mechanically and looked at his friend with his terrible, lifeless eyes.

"It is all over," he said. "She married another man. He is dead, but his memory is to her the only reality."

The doctor stared at him uncomprehendingly.

"Don't you understand?" said Jason, in a tone as cold and expressionless as his eyes. "I am Charles de Blainville no more. I am Jason Hildreth, without a future and without a past."

VI.

One evening, as the doctor sat in his study reading an evening paper, his eye was suddenly arrested by two familiar names. He started with surprise and read the paragraph through; then, folding the paper and putting it in his pocket, he rose, put on his overcoat and hat, and started rapidly down the street. Ten minutes later he burst in upon Jason Hildreth, who was sitting at his desk with a pile of manuscript before him.

"What are you doing?" he asked, for a moment diverted from the object of his visit. "Copy?"

"No," said Jason, looking up with a smile. "It is something—different."

The face, though smiling, was sad, and greatly changed in the last few days. It smote the doctor's heart with a pang of pity.

"May I see it?" he asked, nodding toward the pile of closely written sheets.

"Yes," said Jason, as he handed them to his friend: "I shall want your criticism."

"*'A Lorelei of the Hills,'*" read Dr. Richmond, glancing at the first page. "What is it?"

Jason smiled again, a little bitterly.

"It is the story of a maiden," he said, "who sang away a man's heart and soul; and when he became poor and went away to seek his fortune for her, she vowed to him eternal fidelity. Then, in his sickness and in the silence that came with it, she forgot him, and married for money; and soon the love of her husband stirred in her heart a reflex emotion that she called love. But the knight of the shekels died, and then her heart turned with a vain yearning to her first love. But he, not knowing of her inconstancy, had retained in his heart the image of his ideal. He saw her again, without her knowledge, and learned of her marriage. Then the image of his ideal, the idol he had worshipped, is broken; and henceforth the face of his beloved is to him the face of the Lorelei who has wrecked his life. He goes away, unknown to her, and, taking a new name, begins a new life. Under his new name he wins fame and fortune, but never happiness. He is a painter, and his first great picture is the Lorelei, with the face of his false love. She knows and loves his work, and pierces through his disguise. But her late yearning cannot bridge the gulf of disenchantment, and her pride preserves the secret of his identity. After many years of silence between them, they die the distance of a continent apart, and are buried on the shores of different seas."

He paused and looked questioningly in his companion's face.

"Jason Hildreth," said the doctor, sententiously, "you are a fool."

"Why," said Jason, in bewildered surprise, "what is the matter? Is not the plot good?"

"The plot does very well—for a novel; and I do not doubt this is well written," he said, impatiently, as he laid the manuscript on the table. "But in real life I hope the hero will think more kindly of the woman he loves, and not throw away his chances of happiness."

"What do you mean?" demanded Jason. "What chances of happiness has the hero in real life?"

For answer, Dr. Richmond drew the paper from his pocket and pointed to the paragraph that had so excited him.

Jason looked at it and read,—

"If C. de B. wishes to communicate with E. Howard, he can do so by addressing his communication to Pacific Grove."

Jason laid the paper down without a word. The doctor waited a moment for him to speak, then broke the silence impetuously.

"You will answer it, of course?" he said.

"No," said Jason, slowly; "I shall not answer it."

"You do not mean that you will throw away your happiness now that you have so miraculously found it, do you?" said the doctor, in amazement.

"I have found no happiness, nor chance of happiness," was the reply. "It is of no use to try to restore the illusions of the past: my love is only a broken dream."

"But you are not fair to Elizabeth," persisted her champion. "She doubtless believed you dead and yielded to the pressure of her father's influence when she married."

Jason did not reply.

"Doubtless she loves you still, or would love you as of old, if you would give her the opportunity to do so."

But Jason shook his head; he remembered the impassioned words he had heard her utter at the arch.

"Why, man," continued his friend, "you surely would not expect a woman to remain all her life true to the dead?"

"Yes," said Jason, slowly, "if the woman was Elizabeth."

The doctor looked at him in impatient despair.

"I have an engagement and must go," he said, rising; "but promise me that you will answer the advertisement. You can at least locate your old home and get on the track of all your previous history."

Again Jason shook his head.

"It does not matter now," he said. "The old life is dead beyond recall. Let its memories die with it."

"But you will promise to answer the personal—to please me?"

Jason looked at him.

"Yes," he said, "if you wish it so much, I will promise to answer."

When the doctor had gone, Jason drew a sheet of paper toward him and began writing his reply. Again and again he tried to frame his thoughts in words; and again and again he tore the paper to scraps and committed them to the waste-basket. Now he wrote her a letter of forgiveness and an ardent declaration of his love, and again a torrent of reproaches and a prayer for explanation of the strange events that had occurred since he had parted from her. Sometimes he was cold, sometimes chiding, and again sneering and sarcastic. Sometimes he besought her wildly to be his; sometimes he claimed her, and again spurned her with scorn. At last, however, pride and the de-

spairing thought that she was in truth no longer his friend, and the final reply :

"Let the Lorelei sit on the rocks alone and sing her enchanting songs in vain. Charles de Blainville is no longer of interest to Elizabeth Howard. He is only a shadow before the reality of him she has lost. Besides, he is poor ; and one cannot expect a woman to prefer poverty of the purse to emptiness of the heart. Henceforth he has ceased to exist. Under a new name, he lives a new life in which the history of the past has no part. Let him be forgotten, for his fate is like the wind."

He copied the letter on a typewriter that stood on a little table beside his desk, and enclosed it in an envelope, also addressed on the machine.

When he had finished his task, he pushed back his chair with a sudden thought. He was invited to a reception that evening, and he would go. It was true he had sent regrets, but he could offer the explanation of a sudden change in his plans, and he was sure of a warm welcome from the hostess.

Half an hour later he started out. It was a cold, foggy night. Turning up the collar of his great-coat, he walked briskly against the wind. He stopped at the nearest mail-box and deposited the fateful letter. Then he hurried on, not giving himself time for thought of the consequences.

"So you came, after all," was the doctor's greeting a few moments later, when he found himself face to face with Jason Hildreth in the bay-window of Mrs. Givens's front drawing-room.

"Yes," said his friend, "I changed my mind. You see," he added, in a confidential aside, "I'm after material. I'm going to satirize modern society."

"Indeed !" laughed the doctor. "I wish you success."

"Oh ! you are here, you naughty boy," said a soft voice in his ear ; and, turning, he saw Miss Vaughn, lovely in gray silk and soft old lace. She slipped her hand in his arm and led him away.

"I want you to see Miss Gordon," she went on : "she is charming to-night."

"I suppose that means," commented Jason, "that she has a new Parisian costume."

"How ridiculous you can be !" was the laughing rejoinder.

The next moment the doctor, glancing across the room, and missing half of the sentence his *vis-à-vis* was addressing to him, suppressed a chuckle as he saw his friend engaged in animated conversation with Miss Gordon.

"He has gone to the right place for his material," was his mental comment.

Afterward Miss Gordon reported the conversation to her aunt as the most delightfully atrocious she had ever had with him.

"He said that social functions were a farce," she declared, gleefully, "and that the very use of the word function in such a connection was evidence of the deterioration of the race. He said that Signor Cristoni, who played so beautifully, was advertising himself, and that Mrs.

Givens, in securing him, was actuated by the noble motive of surpassing Mrs. March, who had Mr. Vore, the wild-eyed sculptor, at her last At Home. He informed me, too, that the men and women there were on dress parade both literally and figuratively,—and he looked pointedly at my new gown and said it,—and that you might meet a person every week in society for a lifetime and know no more of his real nature than of that of a resident of the antipodes.”

“Was that all?” said her aunt, anxiously, for she was always on the watch for impecunious suitors, and sometimes remarked plaintively that she did not think it right that fortuneless young men should be received in good society.

“If you mean to ask if he paid me any especial attention,” laughed her niece, “he didn’t; but he devoted a good deal of attention to my sex. He said that usually a woman didn’t have a heart; but if she did, she wore it in some conspicuous place, and if she gave it away she could easily replace it. He said it wasn’t the *fad* for women to have hearts now, anyway; they belonged to a past epoch, the days of chivalry and the times of Fielding. He even made a sarcastic allusion to the spinning-wheel and the bicycle,—the old wheel in the garret and the new wheel on the street. I remember that I muttered something incoherent about wheels in our heads. But I’d like to know what he knows about women’s hearts; I don’t believe he has any heart himself; he’s as cold as an iceberg.” And there was a suspicion of annoyance in the voice at the last words.

Jason himself, in the loneliness of his room, thought of the evening’s pleasure with a sense of disgust. He had gone out to get away from himself, from his bitter thoughts and intolerable sense of loss. He had gone with a reckless desire of abandoning himself to whatever pleasure might fall in his way; and the gayety and frivolity he had seen had struck back like blows on his heart. The world was nothing but vanity of vanities, without Elizabeth; all other women were unreal and insignificant in comparison with her. No one else had ever possessed her sweetness of disposition, her force of character, her beauty. No other woman had ever measured the heights and depths of love as she had done. No one else could ever thrill every fibre of his being with so intense a realization of life in its completeness. And yet she was false to him. The foundations of the universe seemed fallen away from beneath his feet.

The next evening Mrs. Laurence Hanford stood in the long line at the post-office that stretched from the delivery window far out into the street. The evening mail was just in, and post-office and street were full of the idle chatter of the waiting crowd.

Mrs. Hanford bowed and smiled and chatted with the rest; but the action was automatic and mechanical. All the while she was repeating to herself “Will he write? will he write?” with painful reiteration. Then, as the line advanced, and she drew nearer to the window, the words changed to “Has he written? has he written?” They grew so loud that they blotted out the sounds about her; and as she stood before the window at last, a loud roaring sounded in her ears. She took the letter that was handed out to her, and looked at the ad-

dress. It was "E. Howard, Pacific Grove." But the typewritten letters struck a cold chill to her heart.

She had not realized before how much she had hung upon this hope. A thousand times she had said to herself, "It cannot be he." But the words had not been sufficient to uproot the strange idea that had sprung up in her mind. Her aunt could not call the episode of the German verse coincidence, but she did call it accident.

"It is some one that has known him," she said; "and in some way the paper came into his hands."

"But the personal, aunt?" Mrs. Hanford protested.

"Well, if the same man wrote the personal," was the reply, "which I do not admit, either he has some message for you, or he is playing a game too deep for us."

Now, as she walked back to the hotel, with the mysterious missive in her hand, she reflected sadly on the plausibility of her aunt's theory.

"Surely, if it was he," she said to herself, "he would have written in his own hand."

Her aunt was waiting for her on the veranda.

"Any mail?" she asked.

"Only one letter—for myself," said Mrs. Hanford.

She passed on into the hotel and went to her own room. She wanted to be alone when she read it.

An hour later, her aunt found her lying on the bed, tearless, but with a face of despair. She did not look up as her aunt entered the room.

"It was he," she said, listlessly. "He no longer loves me, he no longer wants me; he wishes to live a new life under a new name."

"What do you mean, child?" exclaimed her aunt.

"Read the letter on the table," was the only reply.

When Mrs. Matheson had done so, she turned to her niece with indignant surprise.

"And you think he wrote that?" she said. "It is clear to me that it is some adventurer who is working a scheme we do not understand. He probably wants your money."

"But the allusions, aunt," protested Mrs. Hanford. "No one else could have known them."

"Not unless he had been told," said Mrs. Matheson. "It is patent that your correspondent is a traitorous confidant of the man he is seeking to personate."

Mrs. Hanford shook her head.

"It is true," she said, with sad conviction; "I am sure it is true."

"Will you answer it?" asked her aunt.

"How can I," was the response, "when there is no address? But I shall put a personal in the paper that there are financial reasons why he should reveal himself. He should have his money."

She stopped speaking and turned her face to the wall. Her aunt sat helplessly by the window, staring out upon the flower-plat and the people returning in groups from the post-office. Laughter and merry voices came up to them from the street below.

VII.

Jason Hildreth did not answer the personal that appeared in the papers referring to his financial interests.

"What is the use?" he said to the doctor, who importuned him to reply to it. "It is only a ruse, for I know I have nothing."

"But your father may have had property in France of which you know nothing; or some relative may have died and left you money."

"Granting the possibility of such a thing," said Jason, "it does not matter to me. I have enough to live on, and I no longer care to return to my old home." And he remained inexorable to all the doctor's logic and pleading.

Mrs. Hanford, waiting in vain for an answer to her advertisement, came gradually to adopt her aunt's theory that the man was an adventurer and had found it impossible to put his scheme, whatever it might be, in operation. Haunted by the fear that he might be shadowing her for some as yet undeveloped purpose, she left the Grove, and, after making a hurried trip to Southern California, returned East.

Jason, however, ignorant of her movements, was never free from the thought that some time he might meet her face to face on the street. He began to look for her among the crowd; more than once he had pursued a figure in the distance, only to find himself deceived. What he would do if he should chance to encounter her, he had not decided; but he could never resist the unreasoning impulse to follow up any fallacious resemblance that presented itself. At the theatre, he forgot the stage and the people about him, to stare hopelessly in the mirror where he had first seen her face. He never entered a drawing-room without glancing hastily about to see if some trick of fate had not brought her again within his reach.

But time passed on, and nothing more was heard of Elizabeth. Jason had become grave and a little sad; and his friends complained that his literary work took him away too much from their society. The only social functions he regarded were Mrs. Ellery's At Homes, where he acquired a new reputation for quiet sarcasm, and the meetings of the Criterion Club, where he presented papers so pessimistic that even the socialist was startled. The only lady upon whom he called was Miss Vaughn. Even to the doctor he never spoke of the past.

His novel was successful, and his name began to appear in the leading magazines, chiefly over descriptive and out-door articles, the material for which was drawn from the mountains and valleys and coast of California. Thus three years went by before he came to another turning-point in his life.

It was on a bleak and foggy day that the doctor, alighting from his buggy to enter the house of a patient, and holding his head down against the sweep of the wind, stumbled against his old friend. Jason looked up with mild reproach as the doctor began an incoherent apology.

"Come up to my rooms when you get through your rounds," he said: "I am going to sail for Brazil to-morrow."

The doctor whistled his astonishment.

"What's up?" he said.

"A series of descriptive articles for the — Magazine," was the response.

The doctor grasped his friend's hand and began voluble congratulations. Jason smiled a little sadly.

"Yes," he said, slowly; "once I would have cared for the honor; now it does not matter."

"It is the one chance you needed to wake you from your indifference to life," said the doctor, sharply, "and I advise you to improve it. I wish," he added, with a malicious after-thought, "I could force you to go through the hospital with me and see the poor fellows there that would jump at your chance of longevity."

He sprang up the steps and rang the bell; and as Jason walked slowly down the street, he heard his cheerful voice at the door.

That afternoon Jason received a summons from Miss Vaughn to come to her.

"Of course I meant to run in to say good-by," he protested, as she began a torrent of gentle reproaches. "The matter is a surprise to myself, and I shall have no time to make my adieux to a sorrowing public."

He laughed lightly as he settled himself comfortably in an easy-chair opposite his hostess.

"How much you are having an opportunity of seeing in your life!" Miss Vaughn said, musingly. "You have lived in New York, you have crossed the continent, and now you are going to South America. I suppose Europe will be your next objective point, or the heart of Africa, or the Antartics. I hope you will come back to tell us about it. Remember that you are an American."

Jason flushed uneasily and sought to change the subject. Chancing to look up at the wall back of Miss Vaughn, he noticed the portrait of a young girl, that had often attracted his attention. She was very beautiful, with fair, oval face, bright dark eyes, and brown hair touched with a tinge of gold. The low neck and round short sleeves of the dress showed the plump neck and arms; in her hands, that lay loosely clasped in her lap, she held a pink rose. Now, as he looked from the pictured face on the wall to the living face before him, for the first time he traced the same soft curves of cheek and chin and throat,—though in the older face the fulness of outline and the freshness of color were gone. But as he looked from one face to the other, he scarcely knew which seemed to him the more beautiful; and he thought how lovely must have been the spring-time that would make possible such an autumn.

"It is yours," he said, smiling at her, and looking back to the portrait, that smiled at him in return.

"Yes," she said; and an expression of tenderness he did not understand flashed across her face. "It was painted for my father many years ago."

"Who was the artist?" he asked. "It is very finely done."

She hesitated a moment before replying.

"He was one of the geniuses who have missed fame," she said, at last, with a ring of sadness in her voice. "He was a young man who gave up art to make a fortune. I do not know what became of him."

A word of indignant condemnation rose to Jason's lips, but was quickly suppressed.

"Perhaps," he thought, "he was bound by an oath to his father."

The conversation turned to other matters; but years after, Jason remembered every word that had been spoken about picture and painter.

When he had gone at last, and left her standing in the room alone, she turned back to the portrait with a sigh; and for a moment a mist of tears dimmed her eyes.

"Had fate been kind enough to give me a son," she said softly to herself, "I would have wished him to be like Jason Hildreth."

That evening the doctor carried his friend off to a banquet given him by the Criterion Club, and it was late when Jason returned to his rooms. Lighting the gas, he chanced to catch a glimpse of his face in the mirror. He stopped and studied it a little curiously. He remembered the first time he saw it during his illness. It had struck him then like a face in the crowd, that one recognizes and vainly strives to connect with distinct associations. He had felt strangely lost and bewildered then; but now that he had a name and a history to associate with the face, he found the memories bitter and would gladly have plunged again in the Lethe of the past. He was conscious of the curious hardness that comes from the dispelling of illusions; he felt suddenly old. All hopes, ambitions, aspirations, seemed idle as the breath of a wind; and, like the wind, they seemed suddenly dried up in blowing across the desert of his life.

But the next day he stood in the bow of the steamer as it passed through the Golden Gate, and as he looked out upon the open sea the dual life he had led seemed to fall away from him, leaving him alone on the threshold of an unknown destiny. Only two faces haunted him, the same and yet different, for one was faithful and the other was false.

VIII.

The details of Jason's adventures in South America do not concern this narrative. Suffice it to say that in writing up the country he investigated the mines, became interested, and invested in them, and that his ventures were so successful that he found himself in time rich beyond even the dreams of Armand de Blainville. He prolonged his stay in the country to more than three years, during which time he wrote a South American romance that gave him rank among the foremost writers of the time.

When he returned to San Francisco at last, seven years had elapsed since he awoke in it to his strange oblivion of the past. He had

indeed lived a new life under a new name; and, like the painter-hero of his first novel, he had won fame and wealth, but never happiness.

The memory of Elizabeth had not died in his heart; he loved her as he had thought her in her girlhood, as good and true as she was beautiful. No other face had ever supplanted the perfect face of his ideal; again he saw in his sleeping and waking dreams the broad low brow, the straight nose, the rounded cheeks, the sweet thin lips, the firm little chin, the clear dark skin, and the glowing depths of the limpid black eyes. But the vision that haunted him was never acknowledged by word or sign, other than the grave lines that deepened about his mouth and the gray that was almost indistinguishable in the light brown of his hair. The eyes, too, were serious, and lacked the sparkle of merriment that he remembered in those of Charles de Blainville.

He arrived in San Francisco after a stormy voyage, during which he thought more than once that the strange fortunes of Jason Hildreth would soon be ended; and it seemed to him that, after all, it made little difference. But as the vessel glided safely through the Golden Gate, and the blue bay, dotted with its islands, lay before him, a pressure to which he had unconsciously become accustomed seemed lifted from his heart. He could scarcely realize, in the exultation of feeling that accompanied his home-coming, that he was not a native American. The beautiful Parisian villa seemed so far back in his infancy that it was little more than a dream; and his old home, still unlocated, rose before him with all the minuteness of detail of long familiarity and love. He had been reading Bourget's "*Nostalgie*" on the vessel; the descriptions of the coast scenes of Italy and France did not paint so fair a picture for his eyes as the lovely American shores, with their fringes of pine and palm and the beautiful curves of the bays; and while yet outside the bar, as he had seen the flag wave proudly from Fort Point, his heart had swelled and sudden tears had dimmed his eyes.

"Charles de Blainville may have been a Frenchman," he said to himself; "but surely Jason Hildreth is an American."

As the ship drew near the wharf, the warmth of feeling centralized till it had settled about one familiar face and form, those of his truest friend, Dr. Richmond. During his residence in South America he had kept up a desultory correspondence with him, which had become even more irregular after the doctor's marriage to a lady whom Jason did not know: so that more than a year had elapsed since his last letter when Jason wrote him a brief note telling him of his proposed return and the probable date of his arrival. But no epistolary shortcomings could change the real feeling that underlay their close comradeship; and it was but one face in the crowd that Jason sought as the vessel shuddered and stood still, chained like a trapped wild creature to the dock.

He was not disappointed: as he stepped from the gang-plank, a familiar voice greeted him and a familiar hand-clasp welcomed him home.

The doctor had grown stouter and more successful and complacent than ever, but otherwise he was unchanged.

"Come home with me," he said. "My wife is expecting you."

Under protests that were borne down by the doctor's undoubted cordiality, Jason allowed himself to be carried off.

"And how are Miss Vaughn and the fine boy of whom you wrote me?" he hastened to inquire, as he sat down in the carriage beside his friend.

"The boy," laughed the doctor, "is quite aggressive, and already considers himself the most important member of the family. He is fond of company, and will be delighted to see you. As to my aunt, you will be disappointed; for she has returned for a time to her early love, New York. She is visiting cousins from the first to the forty-second degree, and writes very indefinitely of her return. I am sure, though, when she learns that you are here, she will want to come back."

"I may hunt her up before that time myself," was the laughing rejoinder; and it was not until later that the doctor thought there was anything serious in the remark.

"By the way," the doctor continued, "she has just written a bit of news that may interest you. It concerns your old friend Miss Gordon."

"And what of her?" asked Jason, with a smile of amused recollection.

"Mrs. Edwards took her to New York last fall," was the response. "She was very gay all winter, and has just realized her aunt's ambitious hopes by marrying a title and going to England to live. My aunt says that everything about the wedding was very brilliant except the bridegroom. He is rather dull, and decidedly old; but, as the title is old too, I suppose it is all right. The bride herself is not extremely young. But Mrs. Edwards, at least, is happy, as she is now certain of being presented at court."

By this time they had reached the house, the familiar appearance of which warmed the heart of the wanderer like the face of an old friend. Mrs. Richmond received him with the cordiality of her husband.

"I have heard the doctor speak of you so much," she said, "that you seem quite like an old friend."

She was a very pretty woman, *petite* and blonde, and Jason did not wonder that his friend had given up his bachelor freedom to become a *paterfamilias*.

After she had made tea for him, she sent for little Edgar, who in a few moments appeared, holding the hand of his nurse. He was a beautiful child of two years, with large dark eyes and a halo of bright curls. He at once verified his father's account of him by dropping his nurse's hand, going up to the guest, and gravely signifying his desire to be taken, by lifting his little arms to him. Perched on the coveted knee, he entertained his new friend with infantile prattle until borne away by the nurse under vehement protest.

Something in the domestic scene stirred Jason's heart to restless

desires that he had thought suppressed forever. For one moment he saw in imagination the face of Elizabeth in his own home, and dared to dream of a child in her arms. Then the madness passed, and he turned to his hostess to reply to a question she had just addressed him.

She was a bright talker, and drew out Jason on his varied experiences: so that several hours passed before they were aware. Jason wondered how much she knew of his history.

After dinner, when Mrs. Richmond had gone to the nursery, the doctor took his friend to their old sanctum and brought out his choicest cigars.

"Well," he said, as he settled himself back comfortably in his chair, "now that you are a rich man, what are you going to do about the de Blainville estates?"

Jason looked up quickly through a cloud of fragrant smoke at his friend's face.

"That has been troubling me of late," he said. "If it were not for my promise to my dying father, I would gladly bury the name forever. There are too many painful memories associated with it. But, as it is, I feel that the time has come to fulfil my pledge."

"But," said the doctor, startled by the answer his question had provoked, "what are you going to do?"

"It seems hard," said Jason, slowly, "that I should start off again, just after returning and realizing my love for my adopted country; but I see no other way to do than to go to France and make personal investigations where written inquiries have failed."

"And will you live there," asked the doctor, "and give up——"

"Am I not bound by honor?" asked Jason, sadly. "To-day," he continued, "I am Jason Hildreth and an American; to-morrow I shall be Charles de Blainville, a Frenchman returning to my native land."

"To-morrow?" ejaculated the doctor, bounding from his chair in his surprise and grasping his friend by the shoulder. "You certainly do not contemplate such wild precipitancy as that?"

"It is not so precipitate as it seems," said Jason, quietly. "It has really been planned a long time. I should have sailed for France from Rio de Janeiro, but I had not the courage to go without another sight of the land which, in spite of the misfortunes that have befallen me here, has become very dear to me."

"But you will not go for a few days,—a week,—a month," protested the doctor.

"Ah!" said Jason, with a smile, "that is just it. If I did not go at once, my resolution would fail. I would stay a week,—a month,—a year,—forever."

He smiled a little bitterly.

"*Mon pauvre père*," he said, as though to himself; "he did not dream it was a burden he was laying upon me."

They sat and smoked and talked out the greater part of the night,—a night that was afterward remembered by both as the last in the life of Jason Hildreth.

IX.

"Charles de Blainville," read Miss Vaughn, in bewilderment, as the maid handed her a card. "I do not know him."

"But he says, ma'am," persisted the girl, "that he is an old friend from California."

"There must be some mistake; but I will see him," was the response; and the speaker descended to the drawing-room.

As she entered, a tall figure, with handsome, bronzed face, rose to meet her with outstretched hand.

"Jason Hildreth!" she exclaimed, joyfully, as she clasped the extended hand.

"You must have sent up the wrong card," she went on; "for there was some French name on it. I am delighted to see you, and I am going to show you New York. It is not at all as I expected it to be from your descriptions."

"Probably not," laughed her visitor, "as I have not set foot in it before since I was an infant."

She looked at him in amazement.

"But I thought you told me——" she began.

"That I used to live here," he interrupted. "So I did. But I have a confession to make. The fact is, I am on my way to Paris, and I could not leave America, to which I may never return, without making a clean breast of it to you. But first tell me about yourself. You are looking well."

He wanted to tell her that she looked lovely; and perhaps his look of affectionate admiration said it without words.

"Thank you," she replied; "I have been quite gay lately, for an old auntie. Cousin Florence is something of an invalid, and finds me quite useful as a chaperon for the girls. But they have never taken the place in my heart of my California boys."

"I remember you used to spoil us shamefully," was the laughing rejoinder.

"But when are you going to sail?" she asked.

"To-morrow morning," was the reply.

"So soon?" she exclaimed. "But I am burning with impatience to hear the story; for I know there is a story."

First he satisfied her curiosity as to the years passed in South America, then briefly, but with intense feeling, related the strange story of his life.

Once during the recital she started forward with shining eyes and parted lips: it was when he mentioned the name by which Elizabeth had registered at Pacific Grove. But she quickly controlled herself, and, in his absorption, he did not notice it.

"To think," she ejaculated, when he had finished, "that I should have lived so near to a hero of romance without knowing it! But Elizabeth still loves you," she added, with conviction.

He shook his head in despairing protest.

"Do women always marry for love?" she asked, scornfully. "There are many women who have the coveted happiness snatched

from their hands; there are some among them that are spared the added bitterness of a commercial marriage."

He knew instinctively that she was thinking of her own past, and for a moment he did not speak.

"That is all over for me," he said, at last. "The only thing left for me now is to fulfil my father's wishes."

"And write us more books," she instantly added.

"You forget," he rejoined, "that Jason Hildreth is dead and that Charles de Blainville is a Frenchman. Whatever he writes will be in his own tongue."

"I had not thought of that," she returned, gravely. "I am very sorry. But how is the public to be deceived as to the manner of its popular novelist's disappearance?"

"I have taken care of that," he explained. "Before I set foot in France, telegrams will be received in different parts of the world announcing the death of Jason Hildreth. His property has already been transferred to the new, or, rather, the old name."

When he rose to go, she insisted on his remaining to dinner and meeting her cousins. She introduced him as Mr. de Blainville, a California friend on his way to Paris, his native place.

When he went away at last, she excused herself to the family on the plea of being tired. But when she had gone up to her room she knelt beside her trunk and took from it a packet containing a daguerrotype and a bundle of letters yellowed with age. For several moments she held the picture in her hands, looking at the frank and manly young face with tear-dimmed eyes. She remembered that for years she had never gone to sleep without pressing it to her lips. But time had softened the poignancy of her grief, though it had not obliterated the face from her heart. She laid the picture down at last, and untied the bundle of letters, touching them with gentle hands.

"It is the same name," she said softly to herself. "Elizabeth must have married his son. Poor boy! and she did not love him." But at the same time her heart turned with pity to Jason Hildreth.

She opened the faded pages, still faintly exhaling the odor of lavender, in which they had long ago been kept, and read again the love-words of nearly four decades ago. There were six letters in all: the first three written in the gallant style of a past generation, and enclosing some quaint, sweet verses; the next two full of passionate protests and pleading for her to act according to the dictates of her heart, and not to yield to the authority of family pride; the last was a despairing farewell, closing with these words:

"I am going away, back to my father in the West. My ambitions are over; my hopes are dead. I have closed the studio that has seemed to me sacred ever since you came to it to have your portrait painted; I am going back to my father's office. I have found that what the world demands of a man is the making of money; and I go forth to fulfil my destiny. Farewell, my sweet; my dream among women, farewell."

Even now, a tear fell from the mist in her eyes and blotted the name that was signed below. The name was Laurence Hanford.

The white hands trembled a little as they folded away the papers in the quaintly sealed envelopes and tied up the packet and replaced it in the trunk. The fragrance of lavender brought back the recurrence of sensations that sometimes an odor or a sound will bring after the lapse of years; for one instant the faithful heart thrilled again with the ecstatic joy of the perfect moonlit night when, standing in the garden under the stars, the maiden had listened to the world-old tale and felt the first kiss of love on her lips.

With a sigh, Miss Vaughn returned to herself, and, rising from her knees before the trunk, stood in front of the mirror and loosened the soft coils of her white hair.

"I am glad he did not marry Miss Gordon for her millions," she said to herself, a little irrelevantly. "She was not worthy of him, and Elizabeth is. If I could only bring them together! but how can it be, when I do not know where she is?" She sighed gently as she remembered that she had not sought to find whither it was that Laurence Hanford had gone out of her life, and that she had never known.

The next morning, as the steamer moved slowly out to sea, the last face that Charles de Blainville saw on shore was the sweet face of Miss Vaughn, who leaned on the arm of her cousin's husband and waved her handkerchief till he could see no more. It was the last time he ever saw her; but the memory of her face never faded, and, under the knowledge of subsequent events, became yet more dear to him.

X.

Arrived at Havre, Charles de Blainville had gone at once to Paris and employed lawyers and detectives to look up the family estates. He knew they had passed out of the family into strange, perhaps bourgeois, hands; but he hoped to locate all of the ancestral property, feeling sure that he could offer for it prices that the owners would not refuse. But, strangely enough, no trace of the lost estates, no record of Armand de Blainville, could be found. There was some terrible mistake, some mystery that the son could not fathom.

He had wandered over the strange city, seeking in vain to identify the villa that lingered in his memory. Doubtless it had been torn down and replaced by a more modern structure. He established himself in the suburbs that seemed most to resemble the scenes of his childhood whose elusive vision the years had dimmed. He tried to mingle with the people, but, though their speech came with perfect ease to his lips, they themselves seemed alien to him. He became a familiar figure on the streets, always looking as though searching for some place he could not find. People began to touch their foreheads significantly as he passed, and the children to whisper among themselves "*le fou*." As he entered his solicitor's office one day, he heard a by-stander murmur in an aside to a companion, "*Voici le maniaque des états*." The clerks in the offices where the records were kept, at first patient and polite, now barely concealed their contempt, or treated

him with mocking courtesy. Only the wealth which he was known to possess protected him from open derision.

At last, discouraged, he turned from the city and wandered through the provinces, thinking that some strange trick of memory had deceived him as to the location of his early home. But here, as in Paris, his search was fruitless.

Thus a year passed, and with the deepening hopelessness of his search he became conscious of an increasing desire to see once more the familiar shores of his adopted country. Perhaps in his wanderings there he might chance upon the home he had known and loved so many years; he might find that nameless city where he had lived. He knew that he would recognize it,—that no changes of eight years could veil it from his memory. And there he would find the key to the mystery of his life; there he would settle down at last and find rest.

And so he turned his face with new hope, but utter bewilderment, to the west. His belief in his identity had been shaken; he had become a wanderer on the face of the earth, a man without a country, even without a local habitation and a name.

He still called himself Charles de Blainville; for Jason Hildreth had long been thought dead. He had read his own obituaries, and the comments on his work by critics who believed him beyond the reach of their pens. He had been thought lost in a pleasure-yacht that went down off the coast near Rio de Janeiro, and the public had mourned him as a genius whose fire was prematurely quenched. Only Dr. Richmond and his wife and Miss Vaughn, who were pledged to secrecy, knew the identity of Jason Hildreth and "*le maniaque des états.*" But the doctor himself had lately lost track of him; for with the doubt of his identity Charles de Blainville had ceased to write even to him. His only desire was to find the home where he had passed his boyhood and youth. So it happened that one day he landed in New York and began his wanderings afresh in the New World.

He knew no one in the city, for Miss Vaughn had long before returned to California; and after a few days of rest and irresolution he bought a ticket for a city in one of the North Central States, strongly impressed with the idea that somewhere in that section of the country he would find his home. He remembered distinctly the nature of the scenery with which his boyhood had been familiar,—the rolling green hills, the wooded stretches of land, and the river, in a bend of which the city was situated. He even recalled the noise of the traffic and the smoke of the factories in the town.

At night, as he lay in his berth and watched through the window the panorama of moonlit landscape, he seemed to feel the force of a magnet drawing him on and on; and when he fell asleep and dreamed, he saw Elizabeth, no longer as the Lorelei on the rocks, but as her own sweet self, standing among the roses in the garden, as he had seen her first. And as he dreamed, in the far-off city toward which he was speeding, a woman knelt by an open window and let the moonlight fall on her upturned face. It was a beautiful face, with broad low brow, and dark eyes dimmed with tears. The cheeks that had once

been round were thinner now, the firm chin trembled, the breast heaved with sobs.

"Oh, God," she moaned, "if it might only be he! if he would only return to me!"

But the sky was far off and cold, and she withdrew her gaze from it. She looked beyond the maples and the lawn, with its carefully trimmed hedge, across the street, and let her eyes rest on the garden. The leaves of the magnolias glistened in the moonlight, and a few rare blossoms shone white amid the green. The wind stirred lightly through her hair and brought to her the odor of violets and mignonette.

And the train sped on in the moonlit night; and in the morning the sleeper awoke with the name of Elizabeth on his lips.

"Might I not forgive her?" he said to himself. "If she believed me dead, and her father forced her into an unhappy marriage——"

The train gave a sudden plunge and stood still. He looked out and saw that they had stopped at a way-station,—one of the sleepy little country places that dot the railroad line in this section of the country every three or four miles. From the modest little station stretched a single long street lined with great maples; beyond the hotel, the store, and the blacksmith-shop, extended on either side a row of white-and-yellow cottages with green window-blinds. The usual loungers were about the place,—the station-master, the freight-agent, and several farmers and idlers from the town. The traveller glanced carelessly by the little group, his thoughts still busy with Elizabeth.

"But she is gone," he said to himself: "however I may forgive her and long for her, she is gone, and I cannot find her."

The bell rang, and the train pulled slowly out of the station, the voices of the people drowned in the scream of the locomotive.

Charles de Blainville peered again through the slats of his blind with idle curiosity; but just as his car, which was the last in the train, passed out of the dépôt, he gave a stifled cry and fixed his staring eyes on a face in the little crowd. It was the face of Elizabeth's father.

He started up, and, after making a hasty toilet, inquired of the porter the name of the station.

"Coleville, sah," the man replied.

"What is the next station, and how soon can I take a train back?" the impatient traveller demanded.

"But yo' ticket reads——" began the puzzled porter.

"Answer my questions, please," de Blainville interposed, sharply.

"Well, sah, the next station is Linton, and yo' can take the noon express back."

The train whirled on, and the young traveller was left alone with his thoughts. To him the face was a new assurance of the reality of his past. He had begun to think it might have been a vivid dream, an illusion of his illness; that Elizabeth herself, whom he had not seen for years, was a phantom of a disordered brain. Upon this man now hung his destiny. He knew his name, his home, his past; and, much as de Blainville despised and hated him, he was eager to find him. It seemed to him that there remained lacking to his knowledge

nothing but the names of the localities with which his life's drama was concerned, and perhaps his own name; and these Elizabeth's father could supply.

Arrived at the town, he searched in vain for Simeon Howard. There was no one of that name at the hotel, nor had any of the people of whom he inquired heard of him. He traversed the single long street of the village, turned back discouraged, and retraced his steps to the station.

Just as he reached it, a buggy drove up to the door, and the man for whom he was searching alighted and entered the dépôt.

"I'll wire you about the lots to-morrow," he said to the man who held the lines.

"All right," was the response; and the speaker turned his horse and drove rapidly away.

De Blainville stepped up to the new-comer and bowed.

"Excuse me," he said; "but are you Mr. Simeon Howard?"

"No," was the reply: "you are mistaken in the person."

"Pardon me," de Blainville rejoined; "my memory for names is not good; but you are certainly an old acquaintance of mine. Perhaps you can remember me?"

The man looked at him sharply. The words sounded not unlike the opening of a confidence game; but the bearing of de Blainville disarmed his suspicion.

"It is possible I have met you," he rejoined, politely; "there is even something familiar about your face; but I cannot identify you. Your name——"

"Is Charles de Blainville," said the young man. He watched his companion closely as he spoke, but the name seemed to make no impression upon him.

"You will pardon my persistence," he continued; "but you have a daughter——"

"You are mistaken," the other interrupted; "I have no daughter."

"My God!" ejaculated de Blainville, paling; "is she—dead?"

For a moment the station and the little group of curious listeners swam before his eyes, and there was a sound as of the surf in his ears. But the voice of his companion calmed him.

"You have mistaken the person," he was saying. "I have never had a daughter."

"Will you have patience, at least," said de Blainville, with a sensation of intense relief, "to tell me your name and residence?"

"My name," the man replied, with a slight smile, "you have probably heard before; it is William Smith; and my business is in real estate."

He handed him his card and mentioned the name of the city where he lived. It was the same as that on the ticket in de Blainville's pocket.

The young man started with wonder as he read it. Was it the magnetic attraction of Elizabeth that had been drawing him to her, or had his random selection of a destination been suggested by some faint vibration of memory? At any rate, he had lost time; and he could

learn nothing from the man before him. But once in the city of his old home, he would remember ; and what he could not remember he could easily learn.

When he was again seated in the train, a vague fear struck a chill to his heart. What if the city of his dream was only a mirage of the desert, that would transform itself to something strange when he approached it?

XI.

As the train drew near his destination, his excitement visibly increased. His fear had melted away. He was certain now that he recognized familiar landmarks,—curves of the river, oak forests, and hills covered with vineyards. His eyes were riveted on the shifting landscape ; his breath came quick and fast.

"Now," he said to himself, testing his recollections, "just beyond that curve we will cross a forked bridge ; and as we emerge from it the city will lie before us."

He leaned eagerly from the window, striving to catch the first glimpse of his Mecca. As the train swung around the curve, the bridge appeared in sight, and the next moment they were thundering over it, past the fork in the centre, and out again under the open skies.

"Eureka ! eureka !" the traveller muttered, as he looked out and saw a succession of dusty streets, lined with tall, smoke-grimed buildings, glide by. The train thundered into the *dépôt* : he alighted and looked about him.

"Main Street should be one block to the right," he soliloquized. Then his heart leaped at the thought that he had remembered a name at last.

He walked over to the main thoroughfare, closely observing everything he passed. He remembered the houses well ; the very gables and chimneys were familiar to him. He started with surprise at sight of a well-known but long-forgotten figure approaching him. It was an idiot girl of whom he had not thought since he left home. He smiled grimly at the irony of fate that had thrown her first, of all his old acquaintances, across his path.

He stopped at the crossing as he reached Main Street. It was the same, and yet changed. The horse-cars and omnibuses had been superseded by electric cars ; on the opposite corner, where a line of unpretentious business houses had stood, a new hotel had been erected.

It was yet early in the morning, but as he stood staring about him he was jostled by streams of people passing up and down the street. Struck with a sudden thought, he began to look for familiar faces in the crowd. Perhaps some one would recognize him and call him by name. He did not realize how much the years had changed him. He had left his home young and smooth-faced, filled with buoyant hopes for the future ; he returned to it with features partially concealed by a full fair beard, with lines on his forehead and about his eyes, and the expression of a man who has lived and suffered much. Nevertheless,

he was still a handsome man, in the early prime of life, and many looked at him the second time as they passed. But no look of recognition flashed in their eyes; no word, no hand-clasp, greeted him on his return.

His meditations were broken by a sudden involuntary ejaculation from his own lips. Although the day was cloudless and clear, a man had gone by with an umbrella under his arm,—a handsome, elderly man with clear-cut features and erect carriage. The form had been familiar to the observer from his boyhood; he remembered him as a lawyer possessing the single eccentricity of always carrying an umbrella, summer and winter, through fair and cloudy weather. He remembered the man perfectly; but the name eluded him.

He was standing in front of a drug-store; he looked up and read the sign, "Martin Brothers." He remembered, more from the associations of the place than from the name, that one of the brothers was dark and the other fair. He stepped inside. The fair brother was bending over an account-book on the desk; the dark one came up behind the counter to wait on him. They were a little older than he remembered them, but unmistakably the same.

He made a trifling purchase, removing his hat as he did so, under the pretext of wiping the perspiration from his forehead, but really with the hope that the druggist would recognize him. In this he was disappointed. Taking his package, he walked out again on the street. Was he indeed Charles de Blainville, or had he mistaken the name, as Dr. Richmond had long ago suggested? Truly, the name itself was of little importance; it might be detached from him entirely, and his personality and his past experiences remain the same. But it certainly was of importance in his relations with the world. Without it, he could not establish his connection with the past, and, most important of all, he could hardly hope to find Elizabeth. Notwithstanding his recent experiences, he still hoped for recognition that would render direct questions on his part unnecessary; and his mind still clung tenaciously to the name. He remembered the pride with which his father uttered it; and he could hear the liquid syllables fall softly from Elizabeth's lips. Then, had not Elizabeth herself recognized the initials and replied to his personals in the San Francisco papers?

Inconsequently, as it seemed, in the perturbed current of his thought, he remembered with sudden amusement that it was market-day, and wondered if the time-honored institution of his youth remained intact. During his long residence in California and in foreign lands he had probably not thought once of the old custom that obtained in this city of the Central States. But now he remembered that no social or monetary distinction prevented the "heads of families" from attending the early market and selecting the freshest butter and eggs and vegetables for the family use. Nor was the sex line drawn too closely; many ladies whose natural providers were unable to perform this branch of their duties would not intrust the important matter of selection to servants. He remembered a distinguished doctor and an eminent lawyer whom he had often seen with baskets on their arms, jostling against teamsters and washerwomen as they made their way through

the throng; and, with an irrepressible chuckle, he tried to imagine his friend Dr. Richmond, in irreproachable dress, threading his way through the promiscuous crowd.

While absorbed in his recollections, he had turned his steps toward the old market-place, and soon found himself under the shelter of the market-house, watching the two opposing streams of people as they surged by. The same stalls lined the edge of the side-walks, presided over by the same grizzled countrymen and rosy-cheeked women, as before, and flanked by the same wagons, containing the reserve supplies of vegetables and fruits. Everything seemed unchanged: it was as though he had stood but yesterday in the same spot, watching the street-drama of eight years ago. More than one familiar face passed him in the crowd. He saw an ex-mayor with a great basket over his arm, a prominent merchant tasting a roll of butter in a neighboring stall, and the wife of a railroad superintendent hesitating over the selection of some "home-made" cheese. Laborers and mechanics whose faces he remembered passed him, in overalls and jeans; a lame man whose peculiar limp he recollected, and a burly fellow with a familiar scar across his bronzed cheek, approached. But all passed him by, careless and unheeding: he seemed as invisible to them as though he wore the fabled fern-cap of Teutonic story. It was not here, in the public market-place, that he must seek recognition: so with a sigh he passed out of the crowd and began wandering aimlessly about the streets.

Many buildings he remembered; others by their unfamiliarity he knew to be of recent construction. He passed the theatre, and remembered the celebrities he had seen on its stage; he even recalled the subject of the drop-curtain, Aurora in her car, riding the clouds, and smiled again at the remark he had once heard a woman make that it was Elijah going to heaven in his chariot. He passed the court-house, the public library, and the city hall; and as he looked at them a throng of recollections crowded upon his brain. But still his name escaped him; and had it not been for the thought of his experiences in Paris, he would have sworn that it was Charles de Blainville.

He had come out on Main Street again, and walked idly along until he came to a bend at the foot of a hill. Here he stopped and looked up with a sudden flood of memories. There were two hills before him, between which ran a high-road. On the hill to the left stood a Catholic church, whose beautiful chimes he distinctly recalled. As he stood gazing, the bells smote softly on his ear, and the people began to assemble for some special service. On the other hill, its colors softened by the touch of time, stood the old High School he had attended when a boy. The road wound sinuous around the hill, up whose rugged side a succession of projecting rocks formed the "short-cut" for the scaling of which he and his companions had often been punished in those once-forgotten days.

As he turned at last and pursued his way around the bend, he saw approaching him one of the town eccentrics, a portly negro who followed his vocation on the street.

"Any washing-tubs to ho-oo?" he bellowed, with the old familiar inflection.

De Blainville felt tempted to stop and claim his recognition, but resisted the impulse and passed on.

The street had merged into a road with irregular side-walks, lined with houses surrounded by ample lawns. He had left the business part of the city behind him, and was approaching the suburb in which was located his old home.

"Before long," he mused, "I will come to the old 'plank walk.'"

But in this he was disappointed; for the old walk had been removed and a brick pavement laid down in its place. The street-cars, too, to his surprise, passed him and went on out of sight.

But for the most part the houses were unchanged, save that here and there some were darkened and dingy and others were freshened with new repairs. He smiled at the lines of white cottages with green or buff window-blinds, that he had not thought of for so many years.

Occasionally he passed faces that he remembered; but no one smiled or greeted him.

"I feel like Rip Van Winkle," he thought to himself: "my old haunts have forgotten me."

He came at last to a long, low house, that had once been white, and whose veranda was reached by a short, steep flight of steps. He remembered the place trim and well kept; now the paint had fallen away in patches from the walls, and the crazy steps were broken and discolored. Here an old Scotchman had lived who was noted for his eccentricities of speech. He smiled at the recollection of one night when he and some boy-companions had crouched outside, in the shadow of the fence, and listened to the shrill voice of the old man lifted in family prayers. There had been a temperance "revival" in the city, and he turned his supplication on the subject of his thought. High and quavering rose the voice, the *r*'s rolled heavily and the words rising shrill and insistent at the close: "O Lord, don't let the rum-sellers sell any more rum. Do you hear me, now? Do you hear me, now?"

Amused at the recollection, de Blainville was passing on, when his eye was suddenly arrested by an innovation. A new pump stood in the yard, where he remembered there had been an old well with a windlass. With the recollection of the well came the memory of a day when he was returning from school with Elizabeth and they stopped to get a drink. As the girl reached over to dip the cup in the brimming bucket he had drawn up, a book she held under her arm slipped and dropped splashing in the well.

His train of thought was broken by a sudden thrill of excitement.

"I did not know Elizabeth when she was a child," he protested to himself. But memory was inexorable. The sweet child-face was before him and seemed to look at him with reproachful eyes.

"I will go mad," he thought, "if I do not solve this mystery."

But the sun was high in the heavens, and he remembered that he had taken no thought of what he should eat or what he should drink, and had left at the dépôt the wherewithal he should be clothed.

He did not wish to go to a hotel and register as Charles de Blainville, although his thought clung desperately to the name. This after-

noon he would go to his father's foundry and his old home : surely he would discover all. So, retracing his steps to the business part of the city, he entered a restaurant and made a hasty meal.

XII.

The foundry stood in that portion of the city devoted to factories and dingy tenements, occupied by their operatives and the lower classes of Jews. As he threaded the grimy streets, swarming with dirty children, saw the unkempt women at the doors and windows, and passed occasionally a factory employee in his shirt-sleeves or a peddler with his pack, the scene seemed like a familiar slide adjusted in the stereopticon of memory through which he had been looking all day. He remembered the way perfectly, and at length came to the corner opposite the foundry. Dark and gloomy it stood ; but through its open doors gleamed the merry fire that had held his fascinated gaze when a child. He looked over the door for the name "Armand de Blainville ;" but what he saw was "Wilkinson Bros." The name sounded familiar as he read it ; probably after his father's death it had passed into the hands of some one he had known.

He crossed the street, and, finding the office, pushed open the door, that stood ajar, and stepped in. An elderly man with gray side-whiskers turned from the desk where he had been writing and looked up inquiringly.

"I beg pardon," the intruder began, "but I am looking for an old friend of mine who once owned a foundry here. Indeed, I think this must be the very place. Will you tell me who was the former owner?"

"My father," was the reply. "No name but Wilkinson has ever been connected with this foundry."

De Blainville passed his hand in bewilderment across his forehead. He could not at once adjust his thought to this new phase of the mystery.

"My friend was a Frenchman," he said at last. "He had a son who was a child when they arrived in this city, perhaps thirty years ago. He owned a foundry here until eight years since, when his affairs became involved, and it was reported that he died. Do you know of any such person?"

Mr. Wilkinson shook his head.

"There must be some mistake," he said. "What was your friend's name?"

The name had been purposely suppressed with the object of drawing it out ; but, finding his effort fruitless, the young man replied that it was Armand de Blainville.

"Armand de Blainville," repeated the listener, musingly. "I am quite sure I never heard the name before."

When his visitor had gone, Mr. Wilkinson leaned back meditatively in his chair.

"I wish I had asked that man his name," he said to himself: "there is something strangely familiar about his face."

The wanderer turned his steps up the well-known street, that soon changed to a suburban road from which the ground broke away on one side in hills, on the other in hollows. He walked between rows of tall poplars through whose regular foliage he caught a glimpse of sycamores and beeches on the slopes beyond. He knew the road would come out upon his father's garden, and beyond it, past his old home. There was but one thing left for him to do; to go to the memory-haunted house and, within its walls, find himself and the way to Elizabeth.

He did not hurry over the road; now that the solution of the mystery was so near, he felt a certain reluctance, an undefined fear. Perhaps, after all, Elizabeth had been willingly false to him; perhaps she did not love him. Then she might be far away beyond his reach; she might even—he shivered at the thought—be dead.

He turned from the road into the private drive that he remembered. Here his path was deeper in shade, and soon he caught the fragrance of flowers on the still air. He quickened his steps and in a few moments came to the beginning of the garden. It was not greatly changed; but he noticed that the varieties of lilies, Elizabeth's favorite flower, had been increased, and the magnolias and the oleanders in tubs were larger and more luxuriant than he remembered them.

He came to the cross-road and looked for the first time on his old home. He stopped, and, leaning against the high fence at the side of the garden, let his eyes wander lovingly over the lawn, the carefully trimmed hedge, and, finally, the stately old house itself, whose simple architecture heightened the massive effect of the compact stone walls. The wide verandas where he had sat and built the dream-castles of his boyhood, the upper balcony opening out of the nursery, where he had made his first essays at climbing and been pulled back by his terrified nurse, his study-window, through which he could see faintly the outlines of a desk where his own secretary had stood, with his study-chair before it, all greeted him like the loved features of a familiar face. But as he let his eyes wander again over the lawn and the hedge, a cry of astonishment broke from his lips. Where the house of Elizabeth's aunt had stood, in the midst of beautiful grounds, was nothing but a wide field planted in corn. Nor was there a line of rose-bushes at the side of the lawn, but only an Osage-orange hedge, like that surrounding the rest of the grounds. He looked below, down the quiet street, and saw two small brick houses, and beyond them a stretch of sloping meadow. Farther yet, half concealed by sycamores and elms, rose the brick walls and slate roofs of the missing house. It was so strange that for a moment he thought he must be dreaming. But no. He looked again at his own home, and saw it was unchanged; then back at the distant house, and remembered it distinctly. That the heavy brick pile could have been moved was inconceivable; some strange trick of memory had deceived him for more than seven years. And, yet, could he ever forget the night he had first seen Elizabeth, a white-robed figure standing in the garden just beyond the hedge of roses?

Excited by this inexplicable confusion of recollections, he crossed the street hastily, and, opening the iron gate, walked up the gravel walk, bordered, as of old, with violets and mignonette.

Stepping on the veranda, he paused a moment in front of the door, then rang the bell with the feeling that he was striking the hour of fate. It was answered by a trim-looking maid, who looked at him inquiringly.

"Is your mistress at home?" he asked. As he spoke, he caught sight of a cabinet of minerals in the hall, that he remembered as his father's.

"No: she went to the cemetery," replied the girl.

"When will she be back?" he asked.

"I don't know; perhaps not before dinner," she said.

He started away, but turned back with an after-thought.

"What is your mistress's name?" he asked.

"Who shall I say called?" inquired the wary maid.

"Never mind that," he replied: "I will come again. What did you say her name is?"

"Never mind that," was the retort: "she told me not to admit peddlers and agents."

De Blainville turned away with a smile. He would return that evening, and, if necessary, send in his card. Meantime, why not go to the cemetery himself? It was the only important part of the city that he had not visited.

It was not a long walk across the meadows, and soon he found himself before the entrance. A new arched gate-way gave the place at first an air of unfamiliarity; but this disappeared as he entered and passed up the well-known winding drive.

After walking a short distance, he turned instinctively to the left, and made his way almost automatically between the well-kept lots and monuments glistening in the sun. He had entered the finest part of the grounds, and again and again, as he looked at the names carved on the white stones, they struck like echoes on his memory.

He came at last to one of the finest monuments on the grounds, a tall shaft of red granite. Behind it were five white headstones; beside each lay a mass of beautiful fresh flowers, among which were several rare magnolias. He looked up at the monument and read the name, "Laurence Hanford." "Her husband," he thought, with a thrill. But no, it could not be; for farther on he read, "aged 82." Under it was the name of "Laura, his wife." On another face was repeated the name Laurence Hanford, and under it was that of his wife, Alice. On the third face the name occurred again, this time alone.

"That must have been her husband," he thought; and he looked up.

With a cry, he started back; for he saw Elizabeth standing in the path with a watering-pot in her hand. She had stepped so silently, and he had been so absorbed in the contemplation of the names, that he had not noticed her approach.

She looked at him with startled, wondering eyes.

"Elizabeth!" he exclaimed, starting impetuously toward her.

The watering-pot fell to the ground, and she stood trembling and white before him.

"Who do you think I am?" she asked, in a low voice tense with excitement.

"You are Elizabeth Howard," he exclaimed; "or you were Elizabeth Howard before you married."

"And you," she asked, letting her eyes linger searchingly on his face, though she was trembling so that she could scarcely stand, "who are you?"

He dropped his head on his breast and answered in a low tone.

"For seven years," he said, "I thought I was Charles de Blainville."

A great light broke across her beautiful face; she took a step nearer, and, after another glance that seemed to penetrate his soul, suddenly held out her arms to him.

The next moment she was lying on his breast, not sobbing, but with great tears coursing slowly down her cheeks.

"My darling, my darling," he exclaimed, "you did not forget me, you did not cease to love me when your father persuaded you——"

"I have never ceased to love you," she cried.

He did not ask her his name; for the time he had forgotten the mystery that enshrouded his life and all the strange incongruities of the day; he knew only that he held Elizabeth against his heart, and that she loved him.

At length she lifted herself from his breast and slipped from his reluctant arms.

"I will water my flowers," she said; "then you must come home with me."

A moment later they were walking together across the meadow through which he had come. He wondered where she lived, but forbore to question her, choosing rather to be guided like a child to the solution of the mystery, now so imminent. Instead of questions and replies, their words were protestations of love, such as they had exchanged in the first days of their courtship.

They were yet under the spell of the fascination that usually comes but once in a lifetime, when he observed to his surprise that they were approaching his old home. As she led him through the gate and up the gravelled walk, he turned to her appealingly and laid his hand on her arm.

"Elizabeth, I do not understand," he said. "Did you buy the place?"

"Don't ask questions now," she answered, smiling: "after a while I will explain everything to you."

Her own mind was puzzled by many details of the mystery; but, having divined the central truth, she was willing to wait for future enlightenment, being chiefly concerned as to the best way of divulging what she perceived he did not understand.

She opened the door and preceded him into the hall. As he entered, he looked about him in amazement. He could see through open doorways and drawn portières that the parlors and dining-room were essentially unchanged in furnishings and general arrangement. As she led him into the back parlor, he noticed that some fine paintings and statuettes and rare vases had been added to the room, and the gas had

been superseded by electric lights; there were also a tea-table and one or two easy-chairs that he did not recognize. Otherwise, he was sure that the room was unchanged. The thick Persian carpet, the rugs of Russian fur, the Turkish tapestry, the heavy high-backed mahogany chairs, and the claw-legged card-table that stood in the corner under a bronze bust of Apollo, were the same that he remembered of old.

"First of all," said she, as she drew out for him an easy-chair and seated herself at the tea-table, "I will make you some tea."

He acquiesced without question, waiting wonderingly for her to speak; but she chatted on indifferent subjects, in her rich musical voice that thrilled and filled him with the ecstasy of his old love.

At length she rang for the maid and told her to order dinner served for two.

"While we are waiting," she said to her companion, rising as she spoke, "we will walk in the garden. I think you will admire the flowers."

As they passed out through the hall, the girl watched them curiously from behind the dining-room door.

"That's the way with widows," she said to herself, tossing her head contemptuously. "Going to the cemetery to take flowers to her husband's grave, and coming back with a strange young man that nobody could tell wasn't an agent or a housebreaker, for all I know. Didn't even know who lived here, and wouldn't answer a civil question. She won't wear her black much longer, if it does suit her complexion. But you come here, mister," making a grimace at his back, that was just disappearing through the front door, "and I go."

A moment later the two stood together in the garden.

"Do you remember these lilies?" she said, as they stopped before a luxurious growth of flowers.

"Oh, yes," he said; "they are callas. They are scarce here, but very common in California. I have seen hedges of them there, between the lawns."

She looked at him quickly, and a question trembled on her lips, but she withheld it.

Many parts of the garden he recalled, and spoke of a number of slight changes that had been made.

"You are quite a gardener, Elizabeth," he said.

"You praise me too much," she replied. "I have kept Harvey, your old gardener. You remember him, do you not?"

"Certainly," was the reply; "he lives—he must live in the first little red brick house down there."

Elizabeth nodded a smiling assent.

"And he has a wonderful scientific knowledge of plants," he continued, testing his recollections; "if I remember rightly, he knows little else."

Again Elizabeth nodded. Little by little she led him to talk of old friends and acquaintances, without coming dangerously near to their own relations or the mystery that had separated them. Many of his old comrades that he had not thought of for years he inquired about: some had entered professional or business life in their own city,

others had gone away, and a few were dead. His apathetic wonder had given place to animation, and they laughed and sighed together over the changes of the years.

When they returned to the house and entered the dining-room, the young man felt that he was indeed at home. The same table, with the same china and silver and cut glass, the same chairs of antique oak, even the same etchings on the walls, were there as before his departure. As in a dream he took his place opposite Elizabeth; as he looked at her beautiful face, a passionate sense of possession seized him, and he vowed that nothing should separate them again.

When the waiting-maid had served the first course and retired, he looked at his companion with a question he could not repress.

"You seem to have everything as it was in my father's time," he said. "Is the gallery of ancestors unchanged?"

She glanced up quickly and smiled. "I will take you up-stairs after dinner," was the only reply she made.

Then she turned the conversation into the safer channels of literature and art.

"For a long time," she remarked, "I have read no novel that interested me so much as the last one of Jason Hildreth's. It is a pity he died so young."

"Ah, yes," he answered, avoiding her eyes; "but it may be a better man will take his place."

She started and looked up quickly with a question in her eyes. Then she opened her lips as though to continue the subject, but instead, after an instant's hesitation, turned the conversation in a new direction.

After dinner, she fulfilled her promise and conducted him up the broad flight of stairs to the hallway above.

"First of all," she said, slipping her arm in his, "I want to take you to your old study. I think you will find it unchanged."

They entered the room as she spoke. He looked about him wonderingly. Everything was indeed as he must have left it, even to the pile of manuscript on the secretary, held down by an ivory paper-weight.

"I am going to leave you here," she said, drawing out his study-chair and placing it before the desk; "and I want you to read this manuscript. I think it will explain to you what you want to know. And when you want me, darling," she added, laying her arm about his neck, "ring the bell, and I will come to you."

She drew down his face and kissed him on the lips: the next moment she was gone.

XIII.

He sat down and began to read. At first he followed the words with amazement, then with intense absorption. The little Swiss clock on the mantel struck the half-hour and the hour, and he did not hear it.

Meantime, the mistress of the mansion sat below, counting the moments and awaiting with breathless anxiety the result of her experiment. As time passed and the bell did not ring, she became uneasy and began to pace the floor, her light step making no noise in the thickness of the carpet.

At last the reader reached the last page of the manuscript. A great light had flashed across his face and transfigured it. He arose, staggering with excitement and joy.

"My darling," he cried, groping on the wall for the bell, which, in his nervous haste, he could not find; "my——"

The next moment he reeled and fell heavily to the floor.

The woman below heard, and in a moment had rushed up the stairs into the room and knelt beside the prostrate form.

"I might have known better," she said, with bitter self-accusation. But she was not a woman to waste time and strength in idle regret. She rose and touched the bell, then knelt again and supported the dear head on her lap.

"Send Harvey for the doctor," she said to the maid who appeared at the door, "and bring me a basin of water and some brandy."

The girl disappeared with a disdainful shrug.

"Nice doings for a respectable woman," she snorted,—"up-stairs alone with a strange man and holding his head in her lap. It's time an honest girl was leaving. Her such a beautiful mourner, too," she added, with regretful after-thought, as she hastened on her errand.

By the time the doctor arrived, the women had placed the patient on the couch, without having succeeded in bringing him to consciousness, and the maid, at the command of her mistress, had left the room.

As the old doctor entered, a little, drooping figure with clear-cut features and alert gray eyes, the woman arose, pale but calm, and met him at the door. He was an old friend, the only doctor who had ever attended her in all her life; and as she stopped before him she laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Be prepared for a surprise," she said, as she led him to the patient. "Do you know him?"

The doctor looked down at the motionless form, and started back as though he had seen an apparition.

"My God, yes!" he ejaculated, in amazement.

"He had forgotten his identity," she continued, in hurried explanation; "and I think the shock of recollection brought on this attack, whatever it is. Doctor," she added, again laying her hand on his arm, "will he die? Is he already dead?"

The doctor, who had been examining his patient while she was speaking, slowly shook his head.

"No," he said, "he is not dead, but he is in almost a comatose condition. Send Harvey to me, and we will put him to bed. Stay in the room with him to-night, and do not under any consideration let him be disturbed. If I am not mistaken, in the morning he will awake and remember everything."

When they had put the patient to bed, without disturbing in the least his peculiar condition, and the gardener had retired, the doctor

sat down and looked up at the white but self-possessed woman who had just entered the room.

"Now tell me all you know about him," he said.

He listened attentively to her narrative, and at its conclusion slowly nodded his head.

"I have heard of similar cases," he said; "but I never came across one before. Dr. Camuset cites a similar instance in the *Annales Médico-psychologiques*. I wish I could remain with him all night," he added, "but it is impossible, for my wife is very ill at home."

Promising to return early in the morning, and instructing her to send for him if there should be the slightest change, he went away.

All that night she sat in the room, with the lamp turned low, and watched the sleeper, whose slumber had so much the semblance of death. The wind came up and murmured about the house, rustling the leaves of the maples, and sobbing under the eaves. She rose at last and closed the windows. The moon was hidden in clouds, and the air was heavy with vapors. A sense of oppression, that was not altogether due to the sultriness of the atmosphere, weighed upon her. At length the wind died down, and an ominous stillness brooded in the air.

She looked through the door of the sleeping-room into the study beyond. The leaves of the manuscript were scattered over the floor, where they had fallen from his hand. Among them lay the fragments of a majolica vase that had been shaken from its place by his fall. In the uncertain moonlight, the shadows of the maples flickered across the window.

The darkness of the night deepened, and suddenly a gust of wind blew large drops of rain against the window-panes. Pale flashes of lightning were succeeded by low mutterings of thunder. The wind increased in violence, and the scattering rain-drops became a downpour. The thunder rolled in heavy reverberations; and in the blinding flashes of light the watcher saw the great maples sway in the wind like reeds. She drew the curtains and bent anxiously over the sleeper. His face was calm and white; his breast barely moved with the faintest flutter of breath.

A blinding flash of light that penetrated the heavy curtains and illuminated the still room like the glow of a search-light was followed by a terrific peal of thunder. The house shook as in an earthquake; the wind blew like the blast of a trumpet.

There was the noise of steps running up the stairway, and one of the housemaids screamed. The mistress hurried out in the hall, closing the door behind her, and held back the terrified girl at the head of the stairs.

"Be quiet," she commanded, in a low, firm tone; "if the patient is disturbed, he will die."

"But oh, ma'am," whimpered the girl, wringing her hands, "the barn is struck; and what ever shall we do?"

"Send Ned for Harvey, and tell him to put the fire out the best way he can, and not to send in the fire-alarm. Tell them to lead out the horses."

The girl disappeared ; the mistress returned to her watch. Amid the shrieks of the wind, she heard the cries of the men outside and the trampling and neighing of the terrified horses, mingled with the crackling of burning timber and the noise of crashing walls. She looked down at the face of the sleeper ; it was impassive as before. A great fear struck a deadly chill to her heart.

"Suppose, instead of waking, he should slip away—beyond my reach at last?"

She laid her ear over his heart ; the pulsations were so faint as to be scarcely perceptible. For six hours he had not stirred from the position in which he had been placed.

The storm subsided, and the wind died down with a shuddering wail. The darkness gave place to the lingering morning twilight ; and at last the sun broke radiantly over the hills. The watcher parted the curtains and looked out. The barn had burned to the ground ; the rail fence around the cornfield was lying over the beaten grain.

She went back to the couch and bent a moment over the sleeper. She was sure now that it was a natural slumber in which he lay. His breath came regularly, and a natural flush had succeeded the pallor of his face. Confident that he was no longer in serious danger, she left the room and went below to order an early breakfast, that it might be ready as soon as he awoke.

XIV.

She was detained longer than she thought, supervising herself the cooking of his favorite dishes, and gathering for the table with her own hands the choicest flowers of the conservatory. She stood by the table a moment, surveying it with a look of satisfaction, then turned away to go up to his room and wait for him to open his eyes, with the light of reason restored.

Before she reached the door, it opened, and he entered the room.

"What, Helen, are you up already?" he asked, with a smile.

She started toward him and held out her hands, her face transfigured with joy.

"Dear little wife," he said, as he drew her into his arms and kissed her.

"Do you remember, Laurence?" she asked, wistfully.

"Remember what?" he queried, smiling. "That I was going to read some more of my novel to you? Of course I do. I have even added a paragraph or two this morning ; and I have decided to call it 'The Golden Quest.' The window must have been left open last night, though it was closed when I entered the room ; for the manuscript was scattered over the floor, and a vase had fallen from a bracket and broken."

In one awful moment of comprehension, Mrs. Hanford nerved herself to meet the new complication that had arisen. Her husband had indeed remembered the old life, but he had forgotten the new, and

had taken up the thread of the past as though it had never been broken. But she smiled up at him and expressed her eagerness to hear the chapters of which he spoke.

They had sat down at the table. As the servant entered the room with a tray, he looked up in surprise.

"Where is Lizzie this morning?" he asked, as soon as she had retired.

Mrs. Hanford's lips whitened, and she hesitated a moment.

"She went away—suddenly," she said, "and I had to get some one else."

To her relief, he did not continue the subject, but reverted to his story.

"My book is becoming of absorbing interest to myself, at least," he said, smiling. "You do not know how much I have identified Elizabeth Howard with you and Charles de Blainville with myself. I am using a number of incidents of actual occurrence, too, such as our boat-ride when you wrote for me the translation of 'Seele des Menschen.' As for Armand de Blainville, having no recollection of my own father, I have made him my ideal. Why," he added, laughing, "I really feel as though if I went to the blue chamber up-stairs I should find it transformed into a gallery of my supposititious ancestors."

Receiving no answer, he glanced at his wife and started with surprise.

"Why, Helen," he said, "how pale you are!"

"It is nothing," she answered, hastily. "I did not sleep well."

"You should have slept as I did," he rejoined, with a smile. "I had a very strange dream, that I will tell you after a while, when you come up to my study to hear the new chapters of my story."

As they rose from the table and passed up-stairs, the waiting-maid was entertaining the servants in the kitchen.

"I declare," she said, "if she hasn't put on a pink wrapper, and only yesterday in black for her husband. It's scandalous."

"Hush," said the cook, wiping her wet hands on her apron and placing them on her hips; "Harvey seen his face at the window this morning, and he says it's her husband hisself, or his ghost. He helped put him to bed yesterday, too, and he says he was dead then if ever he see a dead man, and what ever the doctor wanted with him in bed he couldn't make out. It's no wonder the barn was burned last night and the storm so awful, when ghosts come up out of empty graves that never had no corpse in 'em anyhow."

"What do you mean?" demanded the astonished maid.

"Didn't you never hear?" was the reply, in a tone of conscious superiority. "He was lost at sea, goin' from San Francisco to the Sandwich Islands; and Mrs. Hanford just put up the tombstone for him, and there ain't no grave there at all. Are you sure he eat his breakfast?" she queried, dropping her voice.

The maid nodded her head.

"Then you can cross your heart he ain't no ghost," was the emphatic response.

Meanwhile, Laurence Hanford and his wife had entered the study above.

"Laurence dear," said Helen, pushing him gently down in a chair and sitting on his knee, "I want to hear the novel, of course, but first tell me your dream."

"Oh, yes," he said, smiling: "I had forgotten about it. And yet it was strangely vivid, and there was an illusion of length about it such as I have never had before in a dream."

He paused a moment, and she waited in silence for him to speak.

"The first that I remember about it," he said, "was waking up in a strange place with no idea of my identity. To prevent the appearance of insanity, I concealed my ignorance and called myself Jason Hildreth. What is the matter, my dear?" he interrupted himself; for his wife had given a sudden start.

But she signed for him to go on, and he continued:

"They told me I was in San Francisco, and that I had been sand-bagged and robbed on the Pacific Mail wharf. In that city, when I had recovered my health, I succeeded at length in getting a position on a paper. It is strange, the distinctness with which I recall localities there. But I suppose I would find them laughably at variance with the truth, if I should ever visit the city. One day I found your photograph, and then I believed myself to be Charles de Blainville and you Elizabeth Howard. But I could not remember the place where you lived, and I sought tidings of you in vain. I saw you once at Pacific Grove——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Helen, "then it *was* you——"

She broke off in confusion as he looked at her inquiringly.

"Go on," she said. "I will not interrupt you."

"I saw you at Pacific Grove," he went on; "but I found that you were registered at the hotel as Mrs. Laurence Hanford. I believed then that Elizabeth Howard had been false to Charles de Blainville, and I went away and tried to forget."

Helen tightened the clasp of her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"How could you believe I had been false to you?" she said, with tender reproach.

"Why, dear," he replied, returning her caress, "it was only a dream. But I could not forget you," he went on. "I could only bury your name in my heart. I had one good friend, the doctor who attended me in my sickness. Many a smoke I had with him in his reading-den. At length I acquired fame through my pen and fortune through investments in South American mines. Then I determined to go to France and buy back the de Blainville estates. I went, and could find no trace of them; and they called me '*le maniaque des états*.' At last I turned to America, and sought at random to find you. The first familiar face I saw was that of Simeon Howard——"

"What?" interrupted Helen, with an irrepressible laugh, "poor old Mr. Smith, whom you insisted upon giving me as a hard-hearted father in your book?"

"Yes," he said, smiling; "and when he disclaimed the name I

had given him, but told me that he lived in this town, I came on, hoping to find trace of you. I remembered the place and the people, but no one remembered me. I stood on the street and in the market-place, waiting for recognition in vain. I went to the foundry—Wilkinson's foundry, you know—which I had given in my story to Armand de Blainville. They could tell me nothing of my father or of myself. I came here, and, standing by the garden, wondered what had become of the house of your aunt; then, looking down the road, I discovered it,—your mother's house, you know. I came here, and the maid would not tell me your name, nor let me in. Then I went to the cemetery, and saw fresh flowers on your husband's grave,—your husband, whom I imagined to have been a stranger to me, and my rival. I felt utterly alone, forsaken and forgotten. "Why, Helen," he interrupted himself, "what is the matter? You are crying."

"Your dream is so real," she said; "but go on."

"Then you came," he continued, "and, standing by the monument of my people, looked strangely at me a moment; and then," he said, tenderly, pressing her closer to his heart, "you opened your arms to me; and I remember nothing more."

"It is very strange," she said, with an effort suppressing her sobs. Her heart ached at the thought of his sufferings; but she knew that she had work to do, and that it would require loving skill to perform it successfully. "Come with me. I want to show you something."

He followed her wondering to the window and looked out in amazement on the desolate scene,—the charred ruins of the barn, the fallen and dismantled trees, the broken fences lying on the crushed corn.

"When—how did this happen?" he exclaimed.

"Last night," she answered. "It was the most terrible storm I ever witnessed. Your sleep was deep indeed."

"I do not see how it was possible——" he began.

"Wait," she said, silencing him: "it was not—normal."

"What do you mean?" he demanded, wondering.

At this moment they were interrupted by the sound of the doctor's voice in the hall below. Helen ran down the stairway and intercepted him, before her husband realized what was happening.

"Oh, Dr. Weyman," she exclaimed, "he remembers who he is, but he has entirely forgotten the last eight years. He has been telling me about them as a dream of last night."

The doctor nodded his head with an expression of satisfaction.

"Just so; just so," he said: "it follows out the case cited by Camuset. I have a book of Ribot's with me on the 'Diseases of Personality,' in which it is mentioned. I will give it to him to read."

By this time Laurence Hanford had descended, and stopped at the foot of the stairway agast.

"What on earth is the matter with you?" he said to the doctor. "It can't be more than two or three weeks since I saw you, and yet you look ten years older."

"Perhaps," said the doctor, banteringly, "you are a modern Rip Van Winkle and have been sleeping ten years."

The thought did not occur to him that he had applied that very term to himself only the day before.

"I am beginning to think I am," was the laughing rejoinder: "even Helen, although the change is an improvement, does not look so youthful to me as she should; but I suppose the alarm caused by last night's storm and the loss of sleep are responsible for that. But come in and sit down," he added, leading the way into the room.

"I cannot stay," said the doctor, "but I have a strange case I wanted to tell you about. There is something similar in Ribot, quoted from the *Annales Médico-psychologiques* for January, 1882. Read it, and tell me what you think about it."

Laurence Hanford took the book and began reading aloud at the place the doctor indicated.

"The subject, a youth of seventeen years, V. L., had an attack of hystero-epilepsy, and quite lost all recollection of one year of his life."

He paused a moment and looked up.

"That is very strange," he said. "And you say you have a similar case?"

"Yes," was the reply, "a dear friend of mine."

Laurence Hanford went on reading. The case was in substance as follows. The subject was a vagabond, and was finally arrested for theft. One day, while working as a farm-hand in a penal colony, he seized in his hand a snake, in a bundle of vine-cuttings. He was extremely alarmed, and that evening, after his return to the colony, he lost consciousness. Repeated attacks of unconsciousness followed, and at last his lower limbs became paralyzed. After an interval, during which he was cared for and expressed a wish to live a better life than formerly, he was taught the trade of a tailor, and worked industriously. At the end of two months he suffered an attack of hystero-epilepsy, which lasted for fifty hours. This was succeeded by a quiet sleep, on awaking from which his former personality returned and he wanted to go out to work on the farm where he had seized the snake in his hand. He had entirely forgotten the last year of his life, and when given the implements of his trade was utterly unable to use them.

The listeners had watched the reader's face closely, but he gave no evidence of awakened consciousness of his own dual existence.

"It is very strange," he repeated, calmly, handing the book back to the doctor. "Tell me about your friend."

His voice expressed polite interest and scientific curiosity, nothing more. Dr. Weyman and Mrs. Hanford glanced at each other, and the former rose to go.

"I have not time to stay longer," he said; "but I think Helen will give you the full particulars of the case, if you care to hear them."

Laurence glanced at his wife in surprise. She was looking at the doctor appealingly.

"It is better so," the doctor murmured to her aside, as she accompanied him to the door. "You will know how to break it to him with the least possible shock."

XV.

When he had gone, Helen turned to her husband and slipped her arm through his.

"Come to the library with me," she said: "I want to show you something."

He looked a little surprised, but went with her.

"Excuse me, my dear," he said, "but you will have to hurry. I think I had better go to see Munson this morning about those new lots he was speaking of in the South Addition."

Munson was the old family lawyer. He had been dead five years.

Helen paled a little, but gave a guarded reply.

"Do you know," she said, as they entered the room, "to whom the doctor referred?"

"Why, no," he replied: "how should I? And how do you happen to know about it?"

"Because," was the slow response, "I saw the quiet sleep that preceded the awaking to renewed consciousness of the old personality; I watched through the night by the sleeper's side, waiting and yearning for the first sign of recognition he might give me."

"Why, Helen," said her husband, in surprise, "I do not understand you. When could you have done this? When were you away from home, and in whom are you interested so much?"

"Do you not know yet?" asked Helen, laying her hand on his arm.

He shook his head wonderingly.

They were standing by a shelf of new books, and, drawing from it the latest novel of Jason Hildreth, she placed the volume in his hands.

"Jason Hildreth!" he repeated, in bewilderment: "the name in my dream."

He turned the fly-leaves, and stopped at the dedication in amazement:

"To my friend and comrade, Dr. Edgar Richmond, of San Francisco."

Two bits of torn paper fluttered from between the leaves and fell in his hand. On them were written, in German and English, the words of Goethe,—

Soul of man,
How like the water!
Fate of man,
How like the wind!

He stared at the words, then turned again to his wife.

"What does it mean, Helen?" he asked. "Surely I must be dreaming now."

"No, dear," she said, passing her arm about his neck and leaning on his breast, "you are awake now. You are mine, you are mine, and I will never let you go."

Surprised by her vehemence, he looked down at her and smiled.

"But, my dear," he protested, "I have not the slightest intention of disappearing like a god at daybreak, or of allowing Mephistopheles

himself to carry me off. But, really, I wish you would explain what this means." He held out the open book and the torn papers in his hand.

"Do you not know? Can you not guess?" she asked, in astonishment.

"I have not the faintest idea," he replied.

"But you remember your dream?" she queried, anxiously.

"Yes," he said, "I remember it perfectly."

"Then," she responded, "perhaps I can make you understand. It means—that your dream—lasted eight years."

He started back so suddenly that she slipped out of his arms.

"You are mad," he exclaimed.

"No," she protested, standing before him with tightly clasped hands and pouring out her words impetuously. "You were going to San Francisco to get the local coloring for your novel. I had planned to go with you, but mamma was taken sick, and I would not let you give up the trip to stay with me. You had reached the point in the story where Charles de Blainville goes to California to seek his fortune. After you got there, you must have made some sudden change in your plans, probably intending to send your hero to the Sandwich Islands; for your name was in the list of passengers on board a vessel bound for Honolulu, that was lost with all on board. So you must have purchased your ticket and engaged your berth with the expectation of going; but some time before the vessel sailed the accident must have happened to you that the doctor explained when you recovered consciousness. You were sandbagged and robbed on the Pacific Mail wharf. When your reason returned, memory did not come back to you at once. Your last thought before your accident was probably of Charles de Blainville and Elizabeth Howard: so that my photograph, when you saw it, suggested to you those personalities instead of the true ones. It was easy for you to imagine yourself a Frenchman, since the grandmother who raised you was French and you spoke the language perfectly. From the time you found the photograph, you lived the life you remember as a dream, till you came here——"

A great change had come over his face. It had turned pallid and drawn, and his eyes had a terrible stare, as though he saw a spectre. In one awful moment were concentrated the suffering and the yearning and the disappointment of eight long years. The face of the woman before him seemed a vision that was worlds away. He cried aloud in agony and held out his arms to her.

"Elizabeth! Helen!" he moaned.

The next moment she had crept to his breast.

It was not long before a new and brilliant star appeared above the literary horizon. The critics said that Laurence Hanford had evidently been a student of Jason Hildreth and had caught something of his style, but that his genius undoubtedly surpassed that of his unfortunate predecessor. His strange absence of eight years, during which time he had suffered shipwreck and had travelled in many remote parts of the world, his friends believing him to be dead, gave an added interest

to his personality ; but with friends and interviewers alike he was very reticent about this chapter of his history.

The first shadow that fell across his new-found happiness was cast by the death of Miss Vaughn. By the same train that brought the announcement of the sad news from her nephew, Laurence Hanford received the painting of Miss Vaughn when a child, by the unknown young artist, and also a little packet that shortly before her death she had requested should be sent to him. It contained a daguerrotype of his father, set in a jewelled frame, and a beautiful little gold watch, with a long, fine chain. Enclosed with them was a letter, dated several days before her death. It closed with these words :

"As you could not leave America without making to me a confession of what you thought to be your life, so I cannot leave the world without telling you of the new tie that, ever since the discovery of your true history, has bound me to you. Before I knew your real identity, I loved you as a nephew ; but ever since you wrote us the wonderful history of your life, I have loved you as a son ; for had God willed otherwise with my life my son would have borne your name. The pictures I send to you ; the painting is your father's work. The watch, which your father gave me on my birthday, is for Elizabeth. The betrothal ring alone would he suffer me to return to him ; the packet of his letters will be buried with me."

As Laurence and Helen bent over the little packet and lifted the gifts reverently from the velvet-lined case in which they had lain, a faint odor of lavender lingered about them, like the breath of a departed spirit.

The story of "The Golden Quest" was never completed ; but the eldest daughter of the popular novelist, to whom Dr. Edgar Richmond, of San Francisco, had playfully betrothed his little son, was named by her father Elizabeth Howard.

THE END.

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SOME BIRD-SONGS.

IT is pleasant to idle away an occasional hour during the spring or summer, enjoying the fresh, fragrance-laden air and the green-sward with its dots or splashes of color, and drinking in the mingled chorus of songs and calls and the many other sounds that pervade the place. It is pleasant to allow these various agreeable sensations to form a harmonious background to dreamy revery.

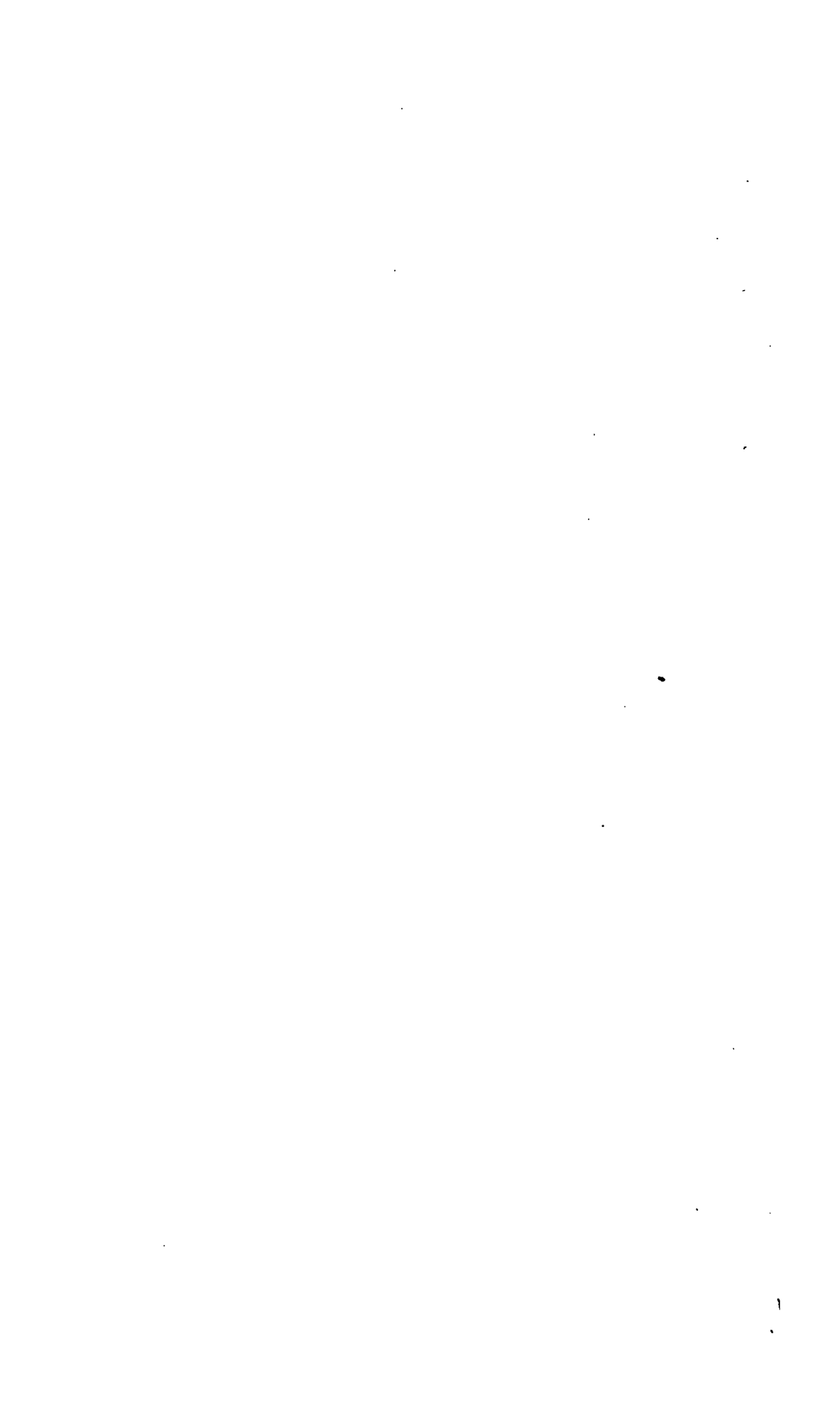
But when, instead of permitting them to remain a mere mass,—a collective noun, as it were,—one separates each individual from its fellows, learns to know the color which each flower lends to the scene, the note which each bird contributes to the chorus,—then is felt the truest, deepest, and most intense enjoyment of the bountiful feast which Nature offers to the senses. Each flower, each bird, is a friend; and about each are clustered the many pleasant associations that friendship brings. That clear, ringing melody from the copse is not merely a pretty song; it is the rich voice of our old friend the Carolina wren, whose cheery note, accompanied by the pure, cool breeze of early morning, has so often brought matin greetings through the open window. That beautiful song of two clear, rather plaintive notes is no longer an undistinguished part of a general chorus; it is the chickadee's love-song, which has so many times broken the long silence of winter and told us of the coming spring, even amidst snow-covered fields and icicle-pointed trees.

The memory is stored with reminiscences of former scenes and surroundings; with details of the habits and appearance of the singers; with incidents of their courtship, their rivalries, their house-building, their parental cares and anxieties; with their social travels to other lands. And these are all stirred to life, to a greater or less degree, by the sound of their voices.

Then, too, we have our favorites among them, whose songs we love to hear,—perhaps from some of the pleasant memories they recall, perhaps from some real or fancied attributes which the singers possess. Very often we are wont to ascribe to the bird a character in keeping with the quality of his voice. The sonorous tones of the cardinal grosbeak suggest strength and power; the quiet, meditative notes of the wood-thrush seem to indicate a philosophical, sober-minded nature; the rich, tender contralto of the bluebird is suggestive of a peaceful, affectionate disposition; the plaintive melody of the wood-pewee seems to be the sad sigh of a grief-worn soul. Some birds—the song-sparrow, the bobolink, and the house-wren, for example—appear to be bubbling over with happiness. Others, such as the meadow-lark and the field-sparrow, are apparently deeply oppressed by the weight of this life's cares and sorrows; while the poor little screech-owl utters a wail that might come from the depths of a most profound despondency. “O-o-o-o-o! that I never had been bo-o-o-orn!” is what he seemed to Thoreau to say; and no words better characterize the gloom that pervades his plaint.









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